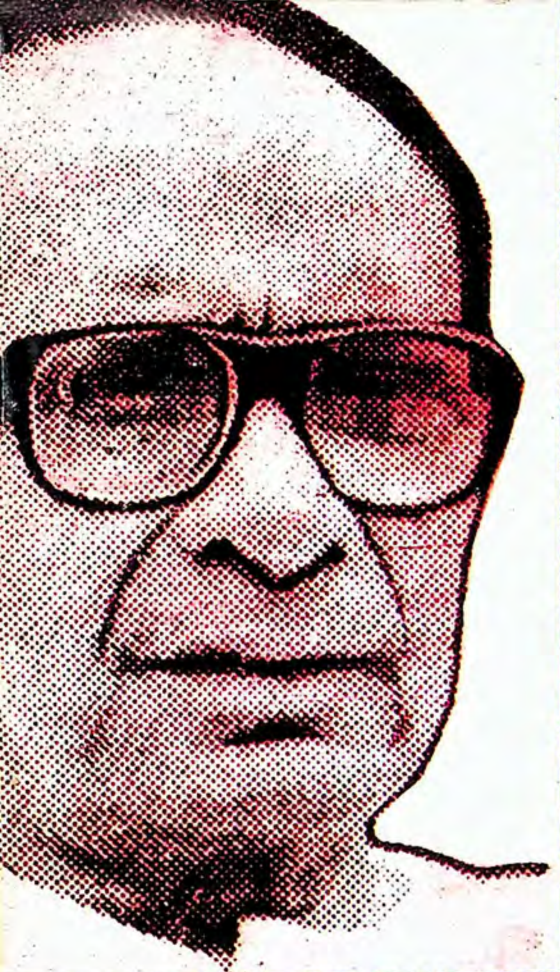
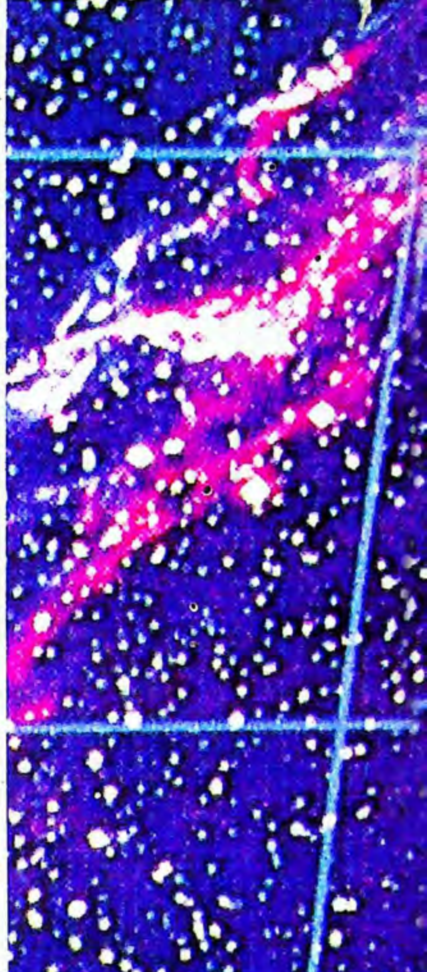



Biju Patnaik

The Legendary Pilot and Live-wire Politician

Biju Patnaik was a pilot in British India. Physically tall, he was taller in spirit and mission. Through his secret and sacred errands to distribute movement posters and pamphlets, he participated in the Indian freedom movement and came in close contact with Aruna Asaf Ali and Jaya Prakash Narayan et al. He was not handicapped in helping the revolutionaries with shelter and cover though he was in British employ, and that undaunted act of assisting the freedom fighters made his home 'the absconder's paradise'. From absconder's paradise to prison, the pilgrimage sharpened his personality to fight for the Indians than to fly British aeroplanes.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru spotted the tall pilot with spotless patriotism and engaged him in the Indonesian independence struggle. The tall Indian pilot was the tallest in his involvement in the Indonesian nationalist movement. His daring in air operations, civilian not military, in rescuing the entrapped top-rung patriots of Indonesia is a superb specimen of courageous adventure by any pilot, by any politician, and stands out as an outstanding monument to Biju's calibre as a pilot, as a person, as a politician.

With a try with industry and entrepreneurship, he switched to provincial politics in Orissa and became a live-wire politician in a span of 15 years. In 1961, he became the Chief Minister. He was adventurous and courageous despite the rigid and orthodox political and administrative environs of the time, and did things that equalled, if not excelled, the Indonesian operation in novelty and thrill. Power goes before fall and he fell; he fell precipitantly. And the fall was so full that it took about 15 years' hard work and hanky-panky before he tasted political power again in 1977 as Minister of Steel and Mines of India.

This short book about Biju Patnaik incidentally deals with several other things — recurring floods and cyclones in coastal Orissa; drought, destitution and starvation death in western Orissa,

especially Kalahandi district; electioneering and Emergency, *Garibi Hatao* and the Total Revolution, corruption and character assassination — briefly as *obiter dicta.*

And the secret of secrets — love and romance in mid-air, high drama in defence establishments, legends and mythology.

A book touching upon two continents, five countries and scores of VVIPs.......

Biju Patnaik

The Legendary Pilot and Live-wire Politician

(A fictionalised biography)

by
Hullasa Behera

1st published April 1998

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To

The people of the Republic of Indonesia who have so generously shown their sense of gratitude to their foreign friends including Biju Patnaik who contributed to their freedom struggle.

-Author

SPECIAL PRESS RELEASE

No. : 27/95 Tuesday, December 12, 1995.

INDONESIA CONFERS HIGHEST ORDER OF SERVICE
ON
PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, MR. BIJU PATNAIK,
MR. MUHAMMAD YUNUS AND MR. P.R.S. MANI.

Indonesia, which is celebrating the Golden Jubilee Anniversary of Proclamation of its Independence on August 17, 1945, has honoured prominent Indian leaders, who had given diplomatic and moral support to Indonesia during the critical period after Indonesia's independence.

At a solemn ceremony held at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in New Delhi Tuesday morning, December 12, the Ambassador, H.E. Mr. A. Sahala Rajagukguk, awarded the Order Of Service "BINTANG REPUBLIC INDONESIA ADIPURNA (FIRST CLASS STAR OF REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA) on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, former Prime Minister of India, and the ORDER OF SERVICE "BINTANG JASA UTAMA", (FIRST CLASS STAR OF SERVICE) on Mr. Biju Patnaik, former Chief Minister of Orissa, Mr. Muhammad Yunus, and Mr. P.R.S. Mani, both former Indian Representatives in Indonesia.

On the occasion, H. E. Mr. A. Sahal Rajagukguk recalled the invaluable contribution made by Indians to help Indonesia to consolidate its independence. He was confident that conferment of "BINTANG REPUBLIK INDONESIA ADIPURNA; the FIRST CLASS STAR OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and kindly received by Shrimati Sonia Gandhi, is a befitting tribute to the greatness and determination of his personality and leadership and of the Indian people to endlessly

fight against colonialism and injustice, not only in India but also all over the world.

H. E. Mr. Rajagukguk said, I am sure that the conferment of BITANG JASA UTAMA, THE FIRST CLASS STAR OF SERVICE, on Mr. Biju Patnaik, Mr. Muhammad Yunus, and P.R.S. Mani by the Government of Indonesia, has again shown the greatness of Indian leaders and people to uphold and project the right to Independence of all nations.

He expressed the hope that the close and historical ties binding Indonesia and India for centuries together will continue to be further enhanced, strengthened and expanded. He pointed out that both countries were now giving greater economic content to their excellent political, cultural and social relations. He said their bilateral trade had doubled over the past three years to 600 million dollars and pointed to vast opportunities and potentialities provided by implementation of liberalisation and globalisation policies being implemented by Indonesia and India.

H. E. Mr. Rajagukguk expressed the hope that given their close rapport and cooperation both Indonesia and India could well be in a position to "if not dictate", at least mould and influence the international agenda for years to come.

While, Shrimati Sonia Gandhi accepted the honour for Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Mr. Biju Patnaik and Mr. Muhammad Yunus and Mr. P.R.S. Mani, received the honours in person.

The recipients thanked the Indonesian Government for honours bestowed on Indian leaders. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi said the award for Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is in fact an honour bestowed by the Indonesian people on the people of India.

The solemn ceremony was attended among others by Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. R.L. Bhatia, senior Indian Government officials, prominent Indian personalities and members of the Diplomatic Corps in New Delhi.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere indebtedness is expressed to His Excelleny, the Indonesian Ambassador to India for the embassy press release inserted in the book, to Welles Hangen for excerpts from his book, *After Nehru Who*, to *Sambad* and its weekly published from Bhubaneswar, *Samaj* published from Cuttack, *Prajatantra* weekly published from Cuttack and *Telegraph*, published from Calcutta for incidents and anecdotes about Biju Patnaik published in these papers after 17.04.97 as utilised by me in the book.

-author

PREFACE

A good wine needs no bush; but a bad wine does, and so does a new wine. Yet I would have fought shy of the tremendous temptation of forewording this book—the first work of a new writer—if I could. I could not because the book is incomplete, so to say, and requires a line or two at the outset about the design. Secondly the book purported to be an elegy on the legendary leader and statesman, Biju Patnaik, dose not exactly eulogise his virtues and performance from an undiscerning, casual reader's point of view. This ingrained contradiction needs be explained briefly to avert possible disappointment and dismay by numberless Biju fans.

Biju Patanaik was born on March 5, 1916 at Cuttack in Orissa though his forefathers hail from Bhanjanagar area in Ganjam district of southern Orissa. Ganjam district is a fertile ground for rich culture and pursuits. Biju's ancestral homeland, Bhanjanagar, boasts of Upendra Bhanja, the late medieval Oriya poet who boasted of the dignity and greatness of the Oriyas. His poetry—vast and varied, rich and beautiful--emphasises, among other things, the greatness of the Oriyas. Biju was a brilliant student, but did not prosecute higher studies. He became a pilot in British India, but actively participated in the Indian Independence struggle. There is no dearth of evidence that Indians with handsome employment under the British rule hated the Indians and hated the nationalist resurgence in India. His days as a pilot are memorable and more praiseworthy for his historic Indonesian operations to assist in Indonesian Independence struggle. Death-defying daring in the Indonesian operations earns him kudos of an enviable kind. The lavish presents that the Indonesian government offered him in 1950

and the profuse praises that the Indonesian government showered on him thereafter establish his quality and calibre as a pilot, as a politician, and as a man.

In 1946 he joined Orissa politics. In 1947 he was elected to Orissa Legislative Assembly from Cuttack in central Orissa. In 1952 he won from Bhanjanagar Assembly Constituency, in 1957 from Jagannath Prasad Assembly constituency, both in southern Orissa. In 1961 he was made president, Orissa Pradesh Congress Committee and the Congress Party fought 1961 mid-term Assembly Elections under his leadership and guidance. For the first time in independent Orissa, Congress Party secured absolute majority of 82 out of 140 seats in the OLA. He won from Choudwar near Cuttack. He became the Chief Minister of Orissa in 1961 and embarked upon the ambitious construction, development and industrialisation era of the state. But he resigned on October 2, 1963 to act for rejuvenating and strengthening the Congress Party. In 1964 Congress Session was held at Bhubaneswar, capital of Orissa.

In 1967 elections to the state Assembly he contested and lost in Patakura constituency. He was elected to Rajya Sabha the next year. In 1971 he contested four Assembly constituencies and one Lok Sabha constituency as a candidate of Utkal Congress, a Orissa-based party founded and funded by him. Alas ! he lost them all, though his party fared comfortably.

In a by-election from Rajanagar constituency he came to the OLA in 1971. In 1974 he fought elections in Patakura and won, and was leader of the Opposition in the OLA. He was a key player in the formation of Janata Party and was head of its Orissa unit. In 1977 he contested from Kendrapara Lok Sabha constituency and won. After about 15 years, he tasted government power again when he was made the Minister, Steel and Mines, at the centre under Morarji Desai. In 1980 leaders of erstwhile Janata

Party in different outfits and camps fell before the Indira wave. But he retained the Kendrapara seat. He made a hat-trick when he retained this seat in 1984 despite the tremendous Indira sympathy wave in favour of the Congress Party.

In 1985 he resigned Lok Sabha seat to contest Bhubaneswar Assembly Constituency and he won notwithstanding Indira sympathy wave for the Congress Party. He made another hat-trick when he retained the seat in 1990 and 1995 Assembly elections.

In 1996 he won two Lok Sabha seats from Aska in southern Orissa and Cuttack in central Orissa, equalling the feats of P.V. Narasimha Rao, former Prime Minister of India and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, present Prime Minister of India.

The political career graph of Biju Patnaik has witnessed upward and downward trend, almost erratically and inexplicably. Half a century in Indian politics in and out of power, in the state and at the centre, heading ruling party and building opposition structures, enjoying the highest seat of power in the state and a prestigious position at the centre et al is a good show, is a good score. But that does not make Biju Patnaik, the statesman or the man. His mission and message, his ambitions and his dreams make him a magnificent leader, a munificent man; he is a maverick, a messenger and a man of men and women. Facts and statistics are inadequate to describe him; he defies methodical data and made-up analysis.

He is a multi-faceted personality, full of controversies and contradictions, heterogenities and opposites. Any research into his life and achievements reveals a thoroughly inexplicable character. Nevertheless Biju Patnaik stands out vividly and effervescently. If you labour hard or beat about the bush to discover the legend, the myth that is Biju Patnaik, you just hear something like he saying — Oh, why search so much, why search

so hard; I'm just here — Yes, in your scrutiny and scanning you'll never miss the ever-present presence of Biju Patnaik in the political, economic and organisation spheres of Orissa, of India. In success and failure, glory and ignominy, felicitation and humiliation his outstanding presence is notable and never-to-be-missed. Biju stands out like a Pyramid in Egyptian desert sands. If not Pyrmid, he could be called an Egyptian Sphinx. In fact, Chakravorty Rajgopalachari, the first Indian to be the last Viceroy of India, said so of him. Biju will rise — he said in the late sixties, when Biju was enmeshed in the maze and morass of corruption and misuse of power charges — like the Sphinx. And if you look beyond, you will see he is not lifeless, statuette Pyramid or Sphinx; but the vast, ever-flowing blue-water, life-giving Nile that overflows the Sahara sands to endow Egypt with fertility and fame.

Biju shines in success and accomplishments, feasts and fortune, in wins and elegance; but he is more lively, more live-wire, more lustrous in failures and falls, in pitfalls and flaws in setbacks and reversals, in isolations and infamies. Biju is great as a sinner, not as a saint. He is great for his ingenuity and inventions, not for integrity and innocence; he is great for his fluency and flamboyancy, not for fishy, fussy, pussy-cat personality; he is great for his style and temerity, not for vices and vicissitudes.

Biju Patnaik is not a guest politician, i.e., a politician who seizes power by hook or crook, enjoys a treat of glamour and aggrandizement at the cost of the host, i.e., the masses, and then departs without a footprint on the door-mat of the host. He is a great politician, i.e., he stays with the masses, in the mind of the masses whenever he is their master or whenever he is hated by them like a rotten egg or a putrid tomato. And Biju did not appease or assuage the masses with the selfish design to corner votes or gain power, rather he teased or pleased them like their elder, their leader, their destiny-maker. Biju shocked people most often, but

he never sucked the people who loved him and whom he loved.

How much the people of Orissa loved him is evidenced in the 1998 elections to the Lok Sabha in which Biju Janta Dal headed by his son, Naveen Patnaik, secured 9 seats and its poll-partner, Bharatiya Janata Party secured 7 seats on the Biju sympathy wave. Naveen Patnaik, unknown to the people of Orissa and a political novice, won the 1997 by-election to Lok Sabha from Aska Constituency on the death of Biju.

Biju demonstrated pride and self-respect of the Oriyas. He did not bend or bow, cringe or crawl even before Nehru, Indira or Morarji to retain power or further personal interest. The only vested interest he had was the dignity and honour of the Oriyas.

Biju is the most vocal proponent of Orissa's pride and prestige, glory and greatness, self-respect and self-pride of the Oriyas in the recent past, in the best part of the 20th century; but he is not the first or best in this respect. He succeeds Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das who is the most conspicuous champion of Oriyas' honour and glory. Madhusudan's concepts of Oriyas' prestige and dignity can be encapsulated in four epithets — *Malis nahin, salis nahin, polis nahin, barisi nahin* — A true Oriya, a real Oriya does not harbour malice against colleagues and competitors, adversaries and leg-pullers. He just thwarts others envy, enmity and malice fare and square, in the open, as per rules of the game. Secondly he does not 'malis' his boss or somebody who manages things, masters skills or manipulates situations. Here 'malis' means massaging, oiling, flattery, sycophancy and '*hanji*' '*hanji*' of an insulting and ignoble kind.

Oriyas do not 'salis', do not compromise with less or other than the real and ideal, just principles of life and society. They do not sacrifice their ego, their prestige, their dignity, their conceit for selfish, small, shallow and sordid gains for themselves or their kith

and kin. Many Oriyas have courted defeat and disaster on this single count; they have died forlorn and forsaken, but have not given up their convictions and viewpoints. They have never knelt or bent, crawled or cringed to secure temporary, material benefits and goals.

And a real Oriya, a true Oriya is alien to all kinds of polish. Yes, polish is a misnomer for artificiality. Oriyas down the ages have hated cosmetic behaviour and attitude, concoted actions and deeds, feigned emotions and feelings. They are raw and rough and rude and gross, but grand and great. Originality and geniality are their natural endowment. They do not shed crocodile tears; they call a spade a spade. Mannerism and etiquette, the imported commodity, never reached the Orissa market. But in politeness and hospitality, in rendering service and extending a helping hand, they are second to none.

The last important thing about the Oriyas is that they are not 'barisi'. They are not others weapons or pawns. They are independent and individualistic; they are leaders, not led; they are master, not slaves; they are pioneers, not followers. They do things on their own, not at the behest or dictates of others. They kill and are killed on their own, not as an instrument of anyone else's ingenuity or intrigue. They never play a second fiddle to others.

In 1903 in the first organising conference held to organise the disorganised Oriya-speaking tracts, Madhubabu read out a poem of his own. This poem highlighted the attributes and essence of an Oriya. The poem, in short, harangued—malis nahin, salis nahin, polish nahin, barisi nahin. In fact, the poem deals with more than this and is a master piece in Oriya literature and ethos. Biju Patnaik was immensely influenced by this poem. And whoever reads this poem must not forget to endeavour to be tall and stately and gigantic and graceful and noble.

Biju has shown the path — how daring an Oriya can be.

O Oriyas, be daring, not caring ! Fie on the shallow, selfish, insensitive gains, acquisitions, possessions, power and pelf ! Rise ! rise again and rise over again! You are Oriyas, have you forgotten ?

But Biju and before him Madhubabu were eminently patriotic and nationalistic. Even they come in the select club of Indian internationalists of the first order. When they pleaded for and paraded Oriyas' pride, what they really intended is to enthuse them with a sense of courage and conviction, a sense of hope and determination to rise and move forward.That never militates against their national credential. In fact Madhubabu in the inaugural *Utkal Sammilani* session in 1903 stated so specifically. He called India our great mother and Orissa a disabled and depressed child which needed extra care and extreme affection.Both Madhubabu and Bijubabu were far from rank regionalism or pungent provincialism; they were alien to parochialism, Oriya ghetto or zionism. Even during his second term as Chief Minister when Chandrasekhar with outside support of the Congress Party ruled at the centre, Biju's scathing remark that Orissa may consider seceding from Indian union if the Centre continued with its stepmotherly and apathetic attitude towards the state smacks of no real intention of secession or separation by Oriyas. The disgusting economic disparities and abominable concentration of economic power in a few selected houses, selected hands have built up into an explosive situation. The terrorist outfits in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab and the insurgent activities in the north-eastern areas of the country are evidence of the growing unrest and discontentment of the people, especially the youth, of those areas. Political parties and leaders of the country have to take appropriate lessons in economics and micro-development so that the regional unrest and insurgencies that have raised their head for decades past be suitably tackled. Biju's warning is surely for consumption by the national leaders and thinkers.

One can assume Biju's popularity in Orissa, among the Oriyas despite the fact that he could not execute his pet project, the second steel plant during his second tenure as Chief Minister of the state, despite the many controversial statements he made and many unpleasant orders he passed, and despite several unpopular measures he adopted. But his second term as CM of Orissa between 1990 and 1995 is noteworthy for the fact that the high-falutin Biju descended among the poor of the state. Several welfare, pro-poor and pro-rural schemes and programmes during this period that antagonised the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy bear testimony to the unparalleled brilliance of the man. He could just feel the pulse of the poor of Orissa when he raised the daily wages of unskilled workers to Rs.25 per day. The hefty hike in the daily wages as critics and cynics did not tire to denounce was revolutionary in view of the fact that the daily wage of an unskilled labourer in rich Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Maharastra was much less than that Biju announced. Even West Bengal and Kerala with communist governments did not adopt wage-hike of this order. More than any socialist or revolutionary ideal, what Biju attempted to instill in the increment in daily wages is his humanitarian approach. A man—especially the poor, wage-earner has to live a life of ease and prestige—he seems to have belived in this wage-hike decision.

Yet Biju is fairly known all over India. In the limited scope of this book, it is not possible to touch upon that. What we can look at is to look at the number of dignitaries and V V I Ps that attended his funeral in *Swargadwar* at Puri, Orissa. Three helicopter-loads of VVIPs including Prime Minister Deve Gowda, ex-Prime Minister Chandrasekhar, A.B. Vajpayee, now Prime Minister of India, Krishankant, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, now Vice President of India, Devi Lal, ex-Deputy Prime Minister of India, Professor Madhu Dandavate, ex-Deputy Chairman, Planning

Commission of India, Laloo Prasad Yadav, M.P.and ex-C.M. of Bihar, B.S. Shekhawat, C.M. of Rajasthan, ex-Union Ministers, S.R. Bommai, Ram Vilas Paswan, D.P. Yadav and L.K. Advani, Union Home Minister and President of Bharatiya Janata Party, reached Puri to bid tearful farewell to the Beloved Biju. The number of the dignitaries would have swollen five-fold in the minimum had not there been national uncertainty in the nation's capital following resignation of Deve Gowda in the wake of Congress withdrawing outside support to the United Front Government. One can recollect that on 17.04.1997, the day Biju breathed his last, there was hectic search for a United Front leader that would be acceptable to Congress, all constituents of the UF for the job of Prime Minister of India.

Biju breathed his last on 17.04.97, the *Sudasavrata* day, when millions of Hindu women all over the country were worshipping mother Laxmi. Did Biju's departure on this day suggest that mother Laxmi deserted the state?

Is this book intended as the Bible or Mahabharat for the Oriyas ? Yes, it is . Yet the ulterior motive in bringing out this book is to broadcast the Biju spirit, the Biju message, the Biju significance. And Biju message is rarely confined to politics, industrialisation, business or pride of the Oriyas. It is the message for the whole country; it is the message for the youth community of India. Biju is always young, undying. Secret ? He is never afraid of the worst terror and always embarks upon dare-devil adventure. The Biju brand of politics and administration has so much to commend about itself; but the Biju brand of bravery and adventure commends itself so notably and so pompously that one cannot question or discard it. India has made praiseworthy progress in different fields—from computers to space technology, from operation flood to green revolution, from missile testing to garment export, but has made precious little progress in the spheres of

adventure and audacity by the youth. Indian youth may have enlarged its horizon of intellectual activities and international interaction, but it has lagged far behind, nay totally lost, in the sectors of adventure and death-defying dare-devilry. The youths are not to muse or grouse or drowse; they are to drive and dash and crash in the gnawing teeth of certain death. And it is pretty certain that when the youths dash against staring death, the latter flies his fixed post. Biju has shown it, and shown it so recently that there could be no doubt or disagreement over that.

It is perhaps presently clear why I have not eulogised Biju even after his death. I have rather dealt with his worst adversity and his worst mistakes to announce to the world that Biju is not simply a chief minister, union minister, or party leader of national stature. I have attempted to build a Biju that is bleeding of adder biting yet laughing like a tall joker. He is not Christ nor Socrates; he can certainly come between the two albeit in a different category.

The Biju that I have painted or pictured above may be less than what he is. But it certainly suggests why the present book is incomplete. The present book more in the nature of an obituary tribute on his first death anniversary on April 17, 1998 is scarcely sufficient to be the biography of the tall leader, the taller statesman and the tallest man called Biju. I have stopped with his position as the union minister of Steel and Mines. The remaining years of his life requires a detailed and larger volume.

The other point that I may make about is the technique and style of the book. It is not a fiction, nor a biography. If you run after facts and figures and cross -check them with your memory or library, you may be disappointed with or disdainful for the book. If you enjoy a fiction for enjoyment's sake, you will stumble upon hard and bad facts every nook and corner. I have not twisted or distorted facts deliberately to lead the reader to the kingdom of fancy and fantasy, or to simply mislead; nor have I run parallel or

oppposite to proved and established facts to fabricate a legend around the legendary pilot, the live-wire politician. The book is simply the offspring of fact and fiction happily wedded to holy harmony.

Instead of inverted comma, I have used the dash to state matters in direct speech with the belief that that will be easier for the reader to read and reach to the text. Use of dashes for commas is not entirely new or my invention, though it is uncommon. It is perhaps time that the replacement gains wider acceptance by authors and readers.

I can humbly hope and fondly fancy that the book is appreciated by the innumerable people who know and love Biju as well as by the more numberless ones who like to know and love Biju Patnaik, the legendary pilot and live-wire politician.

HULLASA BEHERA
author
April 17, 1998
Sambalpur, Orissa

Biju Patnaik

The legendary pilot and
live-wire politician.

Scene One

In the imperial Royal Air Force Headquarters in Delhi before World War II. In a tastefully and lavishly furnished chamber of red sandstone walls and white marble floor are seated three British Air Force officers of superior rank. They are Mr. Wood, Mr. Foot and Mr. Fletcher. The occasion is to select young captains for the Royal Air Force of the British Empire. The selection board has done with two candidates by then. Now the chairman tips the bell. A junior RAF personnel responds and enters the room.

The next — commands the chairman.

Yes, Sir—pat comes the reply and the airman withdraws.

Minutes later comes in a tall, brown young man, full of confidence and casuality. The member to the left of the chairman muttered something, indistinct and inaudible ; the chairman looked agape, and the third member exclaimed, impulsively and uncontrollably—Indian and so tall ! The of-the-left member was considering the same thing studiously but stunningly. The chairman bred on the British soil and bearing the British blood was quick to overcome the predicament and dissemble the hypnosis. He returned the young man's greetings with nervous and mechanical responses. 'Good morning, good morning, young man.' The other two returned greetings in unison with the chairman, but feebly and almost frightenedly.

And take your seat, take your seat, please—the chairman directed more nervously than normally.

Thank you, Sir—the young man was brief but buoyant.

Just for a few moments there was stillness. The member including the chief of the board looked at the candidate with a sense of tension and difference. The on-the-left member seemed afraid and stirred as if something awkward or untoward had happened. The other member looked at the boy like a spectator staring at a similing lion in the most unlikely zoo or jungle. The chairman broke the silence and begun;

Ok. Ok, well ... what's your name?

Bijoyananda Patnaik—pat came the reply.

Ok, Bizowanaand—the chairman was to continue......

No sir, no. It's not Bizowanaand, it's Bijoyanand, one word and a pleasant word at that; right ?—the young man interfered with the chairman's stammering and put it all pleasantly, plainly and a wee bit firmly.

Yes, yes; that's so. It's so nice, your name, I mean—the chairman seemed to sing a song of sycophancy in the guise of eloquent etiquette.

The candidate kept cool, awaiting questions .

Then youngman, what does your name mean literally and otherwise—askcd the member to the left of the chairman. He appeared interested and easy by then .

Bijoy means victory, special or spectacular victory, and anand means delight or joy of a pure and permanent kind—answered the candidate with requisite pauses and punctuations, but with a smiling face and sparkling eyes.

That's nice, extremely nice; what a fine name! —exclaimed one member.

What's your father's name ?—joined the other member.

That's there in the application before you. Ok, he is Laxminararyana Patnaik—answered the youth indifferently.

What does your father's name signify ? — enquired the chairman.

Laxmi is the mother goddess; the supreme feminine deity. She is the consort of Narayana, the supreme God of Hindu pantheon. My father's name suggests the combination of the two.

Your father is one person, but Laxmi and Narayana are two ....it's incongruous and incomprehensible, I suppose— commented the chairman plainly but puzzlingly.

The young man drew breath. Perhaps he was fumbling for right words and expressions, but undaunted he added— No, no, that's not like that. My father is one, so is Laxmi and so Narayana; but the latter two can join to make it one and my father's name carries that import, that significance. Frankly speaking, Europeans and Americans cannot comprehend Hindu mythology and philosophy so easily and so quickly.

There was a moment's silence and the chairman looked at the candidate with disbelief and disgust. Later he turned aside to the members alternately who did the same too clearly but too casually.

And if you don't mind, Bijoy, what does your mother's name signify ? — queried the member to the right of the chairman.

Concerned about the unapproving expression on the face of the members, he replied plainly but persuasively — Ashalata is her name and that means she is a creeper of hope..........

Creeper, not the tree—intervened the other member rather and quickly.

No, no tree; she stands for a creeper. She cannot stand upon her own legs. Since marriage she is dependent upon my father and before that on my grand father. Impersonally hope is not an independent concept or principle. It inheres in the individual, mostly animate and, especially man.

Wonderful !—all of them exclaimed in unison but in as

low a voice and as studied a manner as possible.

So you're good at philosophy I mean.

No, no, nothing like that — retorted the young man, firmly but not farcially.

Why ?—inquired one member.

It's an idler's eatable, not palatable to me.

Not even Indian Philosophy—added the other member.

It's too serious and too sonorous, and I have not the right kind of inclination for that.

He is doing science in the college—quipped the chairman.

Who's your favourite scientist, I mean Copernicus, Einstein, Edison or Wright brothers ?— asked the member to the right of the chairman.

Not them; but Bhaskara, Aryabhatta, Charaka and Ptolemy. Of the European and American scientists, it's Wright brothers to be sure.

Wright brothers !—interjected the other member with amazement and unease. Any special reasons—he quipped.

The Wright brothers are the only Western scientists I love and admire. They have endowed man with avian agility and ethereal taste. But for them, man would be bound to the bouldered and bulldozed earth and would be marvelling at avian flight with sigh and sourness.

That's why you want to become a pilot—added the chairman approvingly and pleasantly.

Exactly, Sir,—joined the youth honestly and hopefully.

Who are your heroes of India's freedom movement— asked the member on- right.

There're a thousand and one; the Mahatma, Jawahar lal Nehru, Jaya Prakash, Rama Manohar Lohia, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sardar Patel, Subhash Bose, Ras Behari Bose, Chandrashekhar Azad, Udham Singh, Rajguru, Mangal Pandey, Surendra Sai,

Baji Rout, Bhagat Singh, Dal Behera......., the list is endless even in respect of the front-ranking leaders,—he replied with a little nervousness and some thinking, but clearing his throat and the hesitation within a fraction of a second.

I think you have omitted a few well-known names like C. R. Das, G.K. Gokhale, Motilal Nehru, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala lajpat Rai.......and included, Baji Rout, Dal Behera and Surendra Sai etc.—the chairman put it with curiosity and a show of calibre.

That's true. Tilak, Tagore, Rai, C R, Gokhale and the like are some notables I could not mention. But Baji; Dal Behera, Jai Rajguru and Sai are also matchless heroes in Indian freedom movement. Their contribution to the cause of the freedom struggle is not much known to the world outside, even to Indians; yet they are glistening-gems in the crown of the independence struggle. The Oriyas are proud of the fact they are successors of the peerless fighters like them—said the youth in a single breath. The members held their breath when he harangued so eloquently and elegantly.

Well, Mr. Patnaik, you list out workers and leaders who are branded traitors and hanged after trial as better than the ones who follow or did follow the Motilal-Gokhale-Gandhi line; why ? Are you more inclined to the first category of leaders than to the second ?—put the member on-left rather hostilely than honestly.

The youth drew breath, looked to the members with sense and purpose, then hung his head low for a few seconds, and then looked up to say — OK, that's not exactly the case. Gokhale, C R, Gandhi and their camp-followers are as honourable and adorable as the fans and friends of Azad, Udham, Bhagat or Baji. Everyone of them and all of them agree in the single conclusion that colonial India is not the real India, cannot be the real India because there the Indians cannot hold their head high,

and they also agreed that pushing the imperial masters to the trans-Atlantic shores is the only aim and dream of the rising Indians, of the twentieth century Indians, of the modern Indians; and where they differ and differ falsely and flimsily, they strengthen the alien ruler's hands and forces. In reality there is no difference between the two schools of freedom-fighters. Azad, Udham, Bhagat, Baji, Surendra Sai cherished the idea to free India from the treacherous British by the use of force, by the show of Indians' muscles, and by spilling blood on the streets and fields to exhibit that the Indians are far superior to other races and nationalities in martial arts and muscular feats and that they would throw the British beyond the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea openly and manlike, not stealthily and surreptitiously through they entered and invaded India fraudulently.

Stop it, stop it—shouted the chairman at the top of his voice. The other members clattering their teeth at the tattering of their racial pride, just echoed—stop it, stop it you ....

He stopped as extempore as he blasted. For a moment he looked up at the members with fear. He studied the temper and tension writ so well on their faces and their wrinkled brows. He thought he had rushed where angels fear to tread.

You have shocked and stirred us rashly and rakishly—shouted the member on-left.

You have hit hard and hurt a cub in a very unmanly fashion by pulling its mane.—the youth said non-chalantly.

What !!—exclaimed all three.

The youth kept quiet and unfazed. Exchanging glances among themselves and muttering something among them quite inaudibly but indignantly, they reverted to their painted cool. A member put rather bluntly—apologise for this youthful indiscretion.

What !—the youth exclaimed and the member shook invisibly but certainly.

It's the matter of your getting a decent job; ponder and tender apology for the blunder of slandering the Empire and her majesty's people—

No slander at all. It's truth and we cannot wish it away—retorted the youth.

From flying above you'll be pushed behind.......do you remember?—commented a member tensely and a bit ferociously.

Birds fly with their wings, men fly with their wits. I don't think my wits have bidden me farewell—he joined rather firmly and flamboyantly.

To cut short the interview, the chairman directed—you can go.

Thank you.

Scene Two

The same place; the same persons in hot discussion. The member-on-right pleaded with the chairman that it was not nice and reasonable to cut the interview short like that when the member-on-left growled feverishly and fanatically that the youth should not only be debarred from the job to which he eminently qualified otherwise but be brought to book by the imperial police. The chairman confessed that he was out of his senses and temper at the temerity of the youth who lionises men who keep company with the sword to hit the British on the head to free India. The member-on-left left no one in doubt that he would disqualify the young man despite his brilliant performance. The other member was in the worst dilemma; he could not play false to his conscience to announce emphatically that the debonair would be the richest and enviable asset to the Royal Air Force nor could he side with the other member to call the candidate a traitor, an enemy of the empire. He was in no dilemma that the youth was *enfante terrible* and needs must be handled honestly and humorously now not later. Just speaking so much of his intention to the fellow members, the chairman pressed the bell, called the sentry, and ordered him to get Bijoyananda in.

Good morning, Sir—saluted the young man soberly but sophisticatedly. The members responded to the greeting, not gleefully nor coldly.

You'are aware of the rigours and hazards of a pilot's job, aren't you?—asked the chairman.

Yes, I'm—responded the youth plainly.

Nevertheless, you're eager for the job? — joined the member on-the-right.

Yes, I am because I like to fly atop trees, towers and mountains; because I fancy to fly over snow, sands, seas and fields, and because I cherish to see the world below from the heights of the birds, with the eyes of the birds and with, you can say, avian freedom. If danger or death stalks me or stares me or strangles me, so far so good—he replied animatedly and excellently.

The members exchanged glances of appreciation though that could not dispel the stifling slick on their faces.

You blend philosophy and poetry passionately and perfectly — commented the chairman.

I am alien to either as humanism to Hitler — retorted the youth. The members laughed loudly immediately, but stopped all on a sudden, as if jerked by a bump. An air of unpleasant dilemma pervaded their cheeks; they could not make out what he meant.

Did he disparage Hitler?—they seemed to question themselves. The member on-the-right drew his breath in and asked — How do you view Hitler's views of his being a superman?

As I view a rotten egg, a stinking pond or a suffocating space—pat came the youth's reply.

What about his claim that the Germans are the superior race of mankind ? — put the chairman rather enthusiastically.

Absolutely right — responded the young man with an air of conviction and admiration.

The members were stunned, and speechless for quite several minutes. Regaining his poise earlier than others, the member on-the-left asked — How is it that Hitler is not the superman but the Germans the superior race?

It's as clear as broad day light. Hitler is a hanky-panky, handy-dandy hanger-on with bloated ego and blunted intellect.

He does not represent the German race; he, in fact, does not resemble the standard German. The Germans are germinal and are renowned for germinating a good many germicides. The Germanic grit and grist and grip are grand and glorious. What's wrong if they say they are the superior race on earth? What others have to do is to beat their ego by being more brilliant, and more germinal; not daring them on battle-fields and tearing their tanks and helicopters. Why not you outsmart them in science and technology, philosophy and literature so that they bite the dust and confess that they are inferior to such and such races in the West or in the East? By hard-hitting Hitler on the horrible war-fields, you vanquish a man and his army; but you cannot kill the ego or ethos that is Hitler. The young man said all this in one go, but neither in a hurry nor in a hysteria.

The selection board was quiet and cool. The chairman cleared his throat and said — Mr. Patnaik, it's all over; you can go.

Thank you, Sir — he said and left the room with heavy and dignified strides.

Scene Three



The same place. The same persons. The interview board is high and hot after the candidate left. The members never experienced such a predicament in their long and illustrious service career, let alone in their interviewing stint. They were dazzled and dumb-found. The budding youth was so tall, so imposing physically; he was taller and more impressive in intellectual faculties. The crucial question to decide about the youth was to know whether he is a fascist and enemy of the empire before he was selected to join as a pilot in the RAF. The members wore a look of studied coolness within and stifling stiffness without. The more they wanted to be relaxed and routine, the more they reverted to, relapsed into rigidity and mutiny. The young man set the old men afire; he lighted the cold candle of their imagination and interest. While in one go he demanded their attention, deserved their approbation; in the next he incited hatred and suspicion. What does that mean to harangue high on the German race and hiss hackneyed against Hitler in the same breath? He meant business and was neither high falutin nor high-flown in what he hinted at.

The chairman killed the cool, uncomfortable atmosphere by saying — O.K. we can give him the benefit of doubt.

. What's there to doubt about. He's hundred per cent inimical to the cause and interest of the empire. He will not serve, but stab his master. To keep him in the pay-roll of RAF means to allow a die-hard criminal on parole to prowl on innocent picnickers

and pupils, you can say — commented the member on-the-left.

No, nothing like that — interrupted the member on-the-right — we can take a cool and careful view on the view of the youth who, at his age, is more prone to emotional outbursts than to considered, yet cosmetic, opinions. His naturality and his naturalness is what we should hold high. He is, I suppose, free, frank and fearless.

And also fast, you should have added — said the member on-the-left less ridiculously than bitterly.

I can hope so — added the member on-the-right. The on-the-left member looked at him fiercely and wanted to spit some bloody venom when the chairman intervened to say — We're sure he is OK for his job, to be a pilot. What baffles us is his personality and loyalty, which we can consider more carefully than callously by first baring our bias against him because he is brown and a colonial citizen of the crown.

There's no colour complex, I swear — joined the member on-the-left more as a confession than as a factual comment.

Don't be quick and crossed, Foot; courtsey demands calmness and composure when the chairman talks something important — cautioned the chairman and went on — who the fellow holds high-Subhash Bose or Adolf Hitler ?

Bose, I think — said the member on-the-right pensively and pusillanimously. The other member kept quiet, even looked aside.

What you have to say ? — questioned the chairman.

Hitler! if I have to say anything — commented the member on-the-left angrily and loudly.

No, you're unfortunately wrong and say this out of your disdain for the youngling — commented the chairman pretty quickly and comfortably. Then he went on — Bose is definitely a reputed and popular leader in India and I must say he commands

greater respect and popularity outside India on the sole ground that he, for the first time in several decades of the Indian freedom struggle, declared boldly and openly that timidity and passivity are banal vices with colonial citizens everywhere in the world. The Indians having rich and glorious past are destined to be pioneers and prophets of freedom and fearlessness that would ultimately emancipate them from imperial subjugation and oppression. Secondly and more important, Bose's junkets of adventure and rufescents of dramatisation have, undoubtedly, captured the young like this one with frenzy and fancy. Not that they are enemies of the empire or will adopt his methods and mavericks in their careers and courses of life. Besides — he raised his voice — we're about to leave this country in a decade in the most. What's the harm if we recruit youths who are really Indian and who will be really Indian? We do not certainly wish to populate Indian state and society with British hags and hang-overs in Indian colour and odour. Free India must have free Indians. And you mark—he was reddened with excitement and nobleness-a real Indian youth will serve the crown better when he serves because it's his attitude and personality that he should be outstanding in his assignment and it's more so when he is fast with the anticipation that the country's freedom is knocking at the door because he should try to learn the secrets of his trade quickly, not casually, to cope with the upcoming future. He concluded his speech, the deliberations.

The youth topped the list of selected apprentices.

II

The recruitment scenes enacted above are, no doubt, imaginary; but, undoubtedly, not illusory. They could be faultlessly

real if the British officers would have behaved as imagined because Bijoyananda Patnaik, the youth we have been talking about, would not hesitate or hate to take a risk if his pride or prejudices are in peril. Let's see it more fully, more clearly in another contrived situation.

III

India is not yet independent of British subjugation though British dominance over India is anything but real. The countrymen and Congress workers, especially Congress leaders, are jubilant that the two-century old humiliation and harassment is ultimately at an end; but they are equally frustrated and griefstricken that the hydra-headed monster of communal tension and turmoil is on its endless prowl. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian National Congress leader *primus inter pares*, is more concerned with something more distant but important. The fire of freedom that brightens the distant Indonesian archipelago disturbs and discourages him more and more as news of Dutch repression and suppression of the nationalist movement reaches him in Delhi. Except for encouraging messages of hope and high drama, he sends nothing to the suffering and stumbling Indonesians whose tenacious and trouble- infested freedom struggle is likely to burst and to be bulldozed ere long if the piece of information at hand, God forbid, is true, and the information is that the Dutch are bent upon bombarding and bowdlerizing the dilapidated hut where front-ranking leaders of the Indonesian movement are huddled and chalking out their next moves in total oblivion of the deadly attack chalked out by the Dutch forces. Sukarno, Shaharier and Hatta — Nehru thinks to himself are the torches of Indonesian independence struggle. Should they be torched to ashes what hope is there that the flame of freedom movement would spread

from island to island, from forest to forest, from habitation to habitaion thereafter? Should they be pulverised and powdered to dust by the Dutch dynamite and bulldozer who would be there to throw dust in the Dutch eyes and move from place to place to disseminate the thunder and thumbs-up of patriotism and liberation? None, the reply came too soon.

No, no, no, they should be saved at any cost; even transmitting the terrible news is not enough as that would throw things in worse disarray in the freedom-fighters' camp and would demoralise them worst — Nehru argued to himself — someone should go to lift them physically, not to divulge the information stealthily — he added. But who's that fellow? — he dashed against disbelief and despair. Who's there so dare-devil as to stir a hornet's nest? Who's there to descend among a pack of wolves to allow them feast on his slender body? Who's the masochist that will fly thousands of miles to make him an unfailing target of Dutch guns?

Who is? Who is? — he questioned himself incessantly and tapped the floor furiously.

While moving helter and skelter in the lonely chamber, he was being stung mercilessly by compassionless scorpions and serpents. Each passing second aggravated the impending danger, at least sixty times, in his usually unruffled mind. One minute he stood statuette; the next he moved menacingly or miserly; the other minute he stared blankly through the window at the old, gothic building; in another he gazed at the silent ceiling overhead vacantly or vagabondlike. One minute he gave up hope of rescuing the embroiled Indonesian freedom-fighters; the next he was roused vehemently to save them by all means; still next he pondered what to do. He never encountered a predicament like that before nor was he ever divorced of his wits and ingenuity like this ever before. Who'll come to his rescue at this critical juncture? The Dutch are

determined to beat the nationalist uprising with all their might and mischief and they have further decided to shear and tear all foreign help and ham be that from Russian communists or Indian Congress.

The Indonesian weather is more dangerous and devilish than the Dutch defence. You don't know when it fumes or frowns or forks and you don't know when the Indonesian rain lashes or her typhoon gushes; you just have to bear it as inevitable as the Dutch domination. Nehru couldn't think further; he was more daunted and depressed by the inclement Indonesian weather than by the Dutch design. He was between scylla and charybdis; he cannot choose one for the other.

Jawahar was about to yield to the inevitable hand of God and the quirk of fate in respect of the entrapped Indonesian friends. Suddenly he looked skywards and, though his defeated gaze was utterly obstructed by the lifeless ceiling of the roof above, a streak of hope streamed through, and he shouted frenzily and fiendishly. Who's that bloody pilot? — he asked himself. That tall, Oriya pilot, Patnaik or so — he thought next and rang the bell. A young 'Satyagrahi' entered the room and stood silently.

Er who's that pilot... that Oriya pilot, some Patnaik or so? — Nehru asked.

That young, tall and robust Oriya pilot, you mean? — the satyagrahi looked up at Nehru's warmed-up face.

Yes, yes, that one I mean— he was impatient. He's Bijoyananda Patnaik, Sir — replied the satyagrahi clearly but in a low voice.

I know that, I know that; where does he stay? Where can I get him? ....He was impatiently irritated and waited for the pilot, not any reply.

I know, Sir, I know; I know where he stays — the satyagrahi was equally impatient to make a prompt reply.

Shut up, you fool; I want him right now — thundered

Nehru uncharitably with uncharacteristic tantrum.

I.....I..... Sir.........- the satyagrahi could not complete; rushed out, perhaps, irritably.

Nehru rang the bell as soon as the satyagrahi flushed out and was blushed to see a bonsai with bulging belly and oily head. Before Nehru could blurt out something, he put it — I know, Sir, certainly Sir.

What do you know, you hog? — Nehru asked routinely but in a rage.

Where he lives, Sir, that bloody Oriya pilot, tall as tower and powerful as a thunderbolt. Just a few yards away behind the backyard of the lieutenant's farmyard where the old hog jogs in the morning and eases the dog in the evening with astonishing regularity and unastonishing punctuality — the short servant cut short and went out of the room before Nehru threw a duster or inkpot against his bald head.

Nehru smiled faintly. This is India and these are the Indians with whom you have to work and walk on the long road to progress and prosperity. If you ask somebody something, he keeps mum even if he knows it perfectly and pleasantly; if you don't ask another anything, he blares and bubbles as if he knows everything and you have to lend your ears to him even if you don't need to do that. Relieved by the notable naivete of his poor, innocent countrymen he made a few paces on the well-cleaned floor when, suddenly, the door was ajar and a clear, crisp voice behind the half-latched mahegony door rang — May I come in, Sir?

Nehru raised his head and was straight eye to eye with the tall, Oriya pilot looking at him consideringly but coyly.

Oh, come in, come in you fellow — he was impatient but pleasant. His face lit up with hope and confidence.

Thank you, Sir — the pilot said, pushing the door firmly

but noiselessly behind and proceeding to the centre of the chamber with stout but soundless steps.

Sit down, please sit down — Nehru occupied his chair while directing him to sit in the chair opposite to him.

Thank you, Sir — the pilot almost whispered while he sat comfortably and confidently.

Now, you Patnaik, we're in deep trouble in regard to the Indonesian independence struggle, I mean — Nehru spoke clearly but lowly while his wrinkles were stiffened slowly but noticeably. The pilot waited with bated breath.

I don't know how to put it nor do I know how you take it; but I repose enormous hope in you — he added without the usual twists and turns of his fluency in English. The Dutch have contrived of a nightly raid on the hut of the freedom-fighters and are very likely to succeed in smashing the modest building with such nicety and notoriety that Sukarno, Shahariyar and Hatta would be powdered to dust before anyone knows of the ghastly plot or attempts to do something to thwart the hideous attack. The information I have received, God forbid, is authentic and alarming. He went on with intricate intonations of emotion.

What have we to do, Sir? — the pilot put straight and without semblance of sentimentality.

That's it — Nehru paused — and I have summoned you to discuss........

You have to decide and I've to carry out; that's all — interrupted the young man rather haughtily.

No, no, not that — Nehru intervened — you've not heard the whole story. They are encircled and under constant watch of the Dutch forces. Besides, it's not breaking the news to them, but rescuing them from sure and swift death. Nehru stopped after confabulating the horror in dry details and experiencing a shiver down his spine.

The young pilot was quick to share the speaker's feelings with accurate detail and was uncharacteristically browbeaten with a small sense of horror and fear. Nevertheless he shook off his contusion within moments and said — we have to do something; maybe menacing and mischievous.

What ? — Nehru interrupted bewildered.

We just have to airlift them.

What ? — Nehru shouted overwhelmingly.

Yes, that's it, Sir ; of course, only if you nod — added the pilot enthusiastically.

Are you or myself mad? — Nehru shot back with some anger, you can say. How's it possible?

Where's Delhi and where is Djakarta ? Who are the valiant Indians that can jump headlong to the certain inferno ? — he blurted the questions hurriedly and hysterically.

There's no need for many, Sir. And I'm the poor, bloody Indian that can cruise between Djakarta and Delhi in the face of all odds and can throw dust in the Dutch eyes to get Shahariar and Hatta safe in Delhi — the pilot said slowly but sincerely.

Nehru looked up at his face straight and enthusiastically. — It's really so; it's really so young man; it's really so Patnaik — he repeated again and again and rose up to embrace the young pilot.

Scene Four

In a modest, tastefully decorated and lavishly furnished building in an important locale of old Delhi. Hitting the outer door firmly but unferociously, shouted the young pilot — Hey Gian, hi Gian; where's the bloody hag? When this bloody Biju is in a bad hurry, the bloody woman that is Gian is in unnecessary flurry. And you see when the bloody pilot curses or cries hoarse, she sees it all and says a simple "sorry". The bloody chick, where.........

The door opened quietly with a short, smiling woman shouting back — What's the hell with you?

In reply the pilot only smiled intensely and romantically. For a fraction of a second, he was relieved of the hell of the whole hell that seated so fast on his head; the next moment he was his tense self and said - No, no, I'm really in a hurry.

And he stopped with unusual silence.

So it's the next Indonessian errand. That's nice, but be sure you don't frighten another bevy of Indonesian beauties by hovering your aircraft over their heads and huts — joined Gian, all smiles, to lighten the tightened face of the tall pilot.

Hey, hey, hey; hey..........the full-throated laughter of the pilot raised ripples in the silent air of the sophisticated home.

Hey, hey, hey, hey...........joined the bride with equal pride but unequal ease, with slower but more intense sound. Lowering the sound further, she admonished — why do you laugh like that; we may be overheard.

And he stopped suddenly, not out of the fear that the

envious neighbours would overhear them and put them to shame, but out of the urgency of the job on hand. By then the bride took away the briefcase and stretched hands to unknot the tie as usual. But since the man appeared different and a bit diffident, you can say; she stopped and asked — Are you really in a hurry? Where have you to fly?

Before heading for the toilet, he put it all succinctly and systematically. The bride stood still to make out what she can do to stop the bloody pilot from flying alone to the jaws of the Dutch tiger on the prowl to piece off the bloody Biju not for the present mission but for the several past errands when he had given them a clean slip and helped the Dutch-labelled traitors of Indonesia who were hellbent to throw them from their holy soil. She was not unacquainted with his antics and histrionics and she was not unsure of his hysteria when it came to something said by Nehru.

Is it ready ? — he shouted, as usual, from the toilet.

What do you mean, the meal or myself? — quipped back the bride with usual promptitude but unusual terseness.

Yourself certainly —joined the pilot, fresh from the toilet, so irresistibly attractive, you can say. A cool, fresh-water bath made the robust, tall youth trustworthily fragrant and flowery, supple and suffusive. Forgetting the hell of the hamadryad lying ahead, just for a moment, the bride yelled — I'm certainly ready anytime, all time, hey, hey, hey..

Is it so, my bloody nymph — chuckled the youth with peals of laughter that filled the surcharged atmosphere with an elegant and scented air of high romance and higher spirits.

Then let's forget that it is high noon — added the youth while rubbing his broad shoulders with a cotton towel and shaking the hairs vigorously. Small driplets of water clinging to the deep black luxuriant hairs started falling as a result of the strong shaking and rubbing. An amorous fragrance pervaded the four corners of

the bed room. Any other noon the matter would have been entirely different..........

The tall, robust pilot stopped rubbing his bare body from head to foot. By then the rosy bride had brought in the elegant uniform from the wardrobe and held it before his eyes which were glistening as usual but were expressive of something unusual. She reverted to an inelegant silence to watch the tug of excitement and involvement on his broad chin. She laid out the table as quickly as possible and invited him rather absentmindedly as he was already seated by then. But the pilot didn't laugh at the stupidity of the homely bride. He started swallowing the food in chunks and junks, never neglecting to lift the bits and tips that fell during the hurried eating. It's so good, so fantastic — he uttered once or twice, but the sound was lost in the munching of mutton and punching of shrimps. The bride was not there to hear his hiccups and hi's.

I'm coming, Gian — he shouted waving his cap.

There was no Gian nor any usual, smiling response like — OK, wish best of the bestial job. Any other day, the pilot would have left for his errand without bothering about the bride's bidding or beckoning. He is scarcely formal or romantic. He does not relish it that the wife should bid farewell to the hubby when the latter hurries to his workplace. Of course, this bride was never before niggardly to bid a neat and nice farewell to her man when he left for his assignments. Things being a bit different today, the pilot wanted to see the maid with his eyes full of invitation and emotion. Who knows what happens to this bloody errand. He turned back, looked into the bed room through the silver white, soft, silken curtain but could see nothing more than a silhouette behind the curtain. Why is the naughty girl so morose and so uncharacteristically silent — he thought to himself and to plant a heavy kiss on her apple-flabby red cheeks, he proceeded softly and stealthily from behind to spring the surprise. When he lifted

the curtain, he was astonished she was fully dressed for an unusual outing, may be for a long time and for a long distance. For a moment he was speechless; the bride was wonderfully beautiful in her spotless white *salwar kameez* with pictures of radiant red roses strewn over. Modest toiletry added to her pleasant beauty; she looked handsome, not huesome. Hugging her from the back hugely and warmly, he exclaimed — Bravo, well done! well done! hey, how superb is the sweet lady!

For a moment the bride was off her guard; she felt like a matching Minerva and paid the pilot back in his own coin with a hot, handsome kiss on his regal, robust cheeks. The world above and below, on all sides and in and out seemed to be vastly vacant and dark for a fraction of a second when the intense union of the two intensified infinitesimally into one, into an inert point.

Hey, you wicked guy — the bride shouted noisily while disentangling first from the fast embrace of the fastidious youth, who softly let her go. Both stood expressionless for several seconds.

You wicked wench will spoil everything; I have to go — he said with usual haste as he is used to in similar circumstances.

Who stops you for going out, you naughty Natavara? She cried back smilingly and sensuously.

But where the hell are you for?— he questioned more critically than curiously or casually.

That's none of your business, you flying hawk—she replied quizzically while staring straight into his face admiringly.

Yeah, Yeah, that's true. OK, bye he waved his right hand and turned about to leave.

You foolish chap will remain a *Dhenku* as ever. How don't you know that this bloody minion cannot move or live without you even for a moment? — she giggled immediately from behind.

He looked back and he was taken aback to see that she hung her little, nice vanity bag on the left shoulder and was putting on her fancy Belgian shoe that he purchased recently at a Paris exhibition-cum-sale fair. He was in no doubt that the lady meant business. But what exactly is that?—he began to think rather seriously.

O, just a minute, I'm coming back — sounded the bride seriously and quickly when she entered the room again. Say about some seven minutes later, she came out all serious with another bag, a rucksack hanging from the other shoulder.

It's not the time to crack a joke, Gian — he uttered rather irritated.

I'm serious, not joking; do you understand my silly fox? - she replied rather casually while descending on the flight of steps from the rather large veranda.

What's that, you stupid woman? — he shouted angrily.

She turned aside mid-stairs and shouted back ordinarily — Man, this time I have to board your craft and visit the Indonesian wenches that so bewitch you. That's that. Now pilot, straight to your Dakota; that's orders from the chief, you understand — she laughed heartily at her own humour as she rose up the stairs to hold the palm of a shaking and staring youth in a pilot's uniform.

The duck and the drake immersed in heated exchanges on the veranda; while the drake was uncharacteristically cool, pleading and persuading her to give up the dangerous decision, the duck was vexed at being stopped from pursuing her dream project of avian partenership.

I've to go, I'll go — was what she thundered several times.

Finally the woman won. The dare-devils care for only one person, only one person and it is their bosom's companion, the dream girl; and this pilot being immeasurably rash is immensely docile to this duck, a strand of a woman, so to say.

FIRST INTERMISSION

Hey, how fantastic is your craft ? You bloody pilot, never invited me for a companion ride. Ah, how wonderful! — she exclaimed again and again. She forgot for moments that she had children and a home back home. She had seen several crafts from close quarters and from some distance; she had often enjoyed flying with the pilot who is the pilot of her life, her universe. She never visited this 25-seater Dakota though she heard a lot about it from his friends and from him so often.

Inside the aircraft, she was on top of the world. The hot, humid Delhi evening, was inches away from the aerodrome, as if, by the provisions of some strict British regulation. The airfield is entirely lonely, not the whimper of a guard or twitter of a bird could be heard near. The well-maintained, verdant surrounding enchanted the wench to the hilt. Vernal zephyr started blowing with the first ever tunes of a melody, as it were, to please the petulant ears of the weary princess. She seemed to be rising up like a thin column of white but buoyant smoke. She pleasantly forgot that she had children and liabilities back home and was about to dance and jump and skip and leap and run and fun and frolick inside the well-built Dakota. Of course, the dreadful drudgery of the present Delhi was not there during those days and each occasion of mingling with the fresh and generous nature brought in immense energy and imagination to the tied, not tired, souls of Delhites. The pilot was totally different, scarcely conscious of the breeze, the bride or the bridge-partners back home. He

pulled up a piece of wire now, tightened a small knot then; turned a wheel here or pressed a cog there. He who will see him here now will hardly believe that the tall pilot who puffs a cigar when you see and shouts 'bloody' to all and sundry could be so sincere, so workaholic. Out with the repairs, he rose almost with a bang. The damsel on the other end was back on board with that brisk rising of the man.

You've really cheated me so far — she giggled and gibbered as if to herself.

Ah, you would have fallen in love with my Dakota instead of me if I've introduced you to him, I suppose — he smiled sheepishly and sincerely.

I've really fallen in love with this fellow, my God! — she joined, pointing her forefinger towards the pilot. I think I should love this fellow as this fellow loves this fellow — she added pointing her forefinger alternately and quickly at the plane and the pilot as she meant them, and burst out into a boisterous laughter.

You hen-witted hen can't sit at the steering of a van despite my coaxing and contriving — he shot back amusingly.

What'll you do with it (pointing his forefinger to the engine of the plane) if he loves you or you love him? He concluded and laughed relaxed at his dry humour.

Don't you know, you stupid bull, that women only love and love and love........ She hung around the robust neck of the manly pilot while her arms were gradually tightening the grip and her voice was falling down rhythmically. The pilot stood like a solid rock with the dwarfish damsel pressed on his broad, hairy chest like an aircraft clinging to a well-laid-out runway or a ship standing still on the surface of a surfless sea.

Oh, I see — he whispered lovingly and lasciviously while patting her back softly and irregularly. OK, now we'll fly — he added businesslike.

The maid disentangled her arms round the pilot's neck rather slowly and reluctantly. She seemed to be descending the majestic Everest before her short, shapely feet touched board.' Yeah — she said somewhat tiredly and tastelessly.

Can't you wait till tomorrow, even the early hours? You say the weather is horrible just from the Burmese border; you say the weather is unpredictably hazardous over the Malay forests, and you say that the Indonesian storm, typhoon, torrential rains and lightning can scare the death god, *Yama*, right away!........

Stop it, stop it, you hag— he interrupted. It's wise — she continued uninterrupted — to face the Dutch bravely and squarely, at least, in daytime if pleasant sunshine is not there for your asking, but it is entirely unwise to face two Dutches, one in the air and the other on the ground, at the same time at night. The Asian Dutch of inclement weather of incessant rains over Indonesian hills and plains is more menacing than the European Dutch who alternately oscillate between the British and the French to annexe a territory or retain a colony.

You're surely sensible, Gian — he said honestly. But my boss' order is that I'll save them sooner than lightning streaks through a thundercloud, am I understood ?—he concluded with a sense of finality.

Don't make a fuss about your boss, you pouchless pilot — she shot back. Pandit is never rash or irrational like you to thrust the errand upon you in spite of your protests and persuasion. What I suggest is that you fly next morning, *wass* am I understood?

No—he thundered and dragged the damsel to the cockpit.

SECOND INTERMISSION

Whereupon are we flying ?—questioned the sweety partly with amusement, partly with apprehension.

How do I know ?—quipped the pilot what with romantic vein, what with real ignorance of the altitude.

You've got the compass, the scale, the indicator and the hell ....Why are being fudgy ?—she said more rationally than romantically.

Malay—he whispered briefly to cut the conversation at short and mitigate the misgivings of the sweet companion sitting next.

Malay, my Lord—she exclaimed. The grave-like silence of the Dakota was ripped apart by the sound. The pilot turned his left eye to see if anything went wrong.

What hell, why do you cry out like this in the mid-air ? Don't you know anything about a pilot's job ? Attention, it's attention — right and left — that makes a pilot of a man. Should I have broken concentration on that what would happen ?—he admonished honestly.

Sorry, I'm sorry; you see—she said leaning a little more toward the pilot and holding her ear-tips by both hands as little girls do before their elders or teachers in a manner of confession or rectification.

Hi pretty foolish little girl—the pilot was pleased as he uttered this satirically.

And Malay, shall I say ?—she sought his permission rather childishly, cherubically.

Sure—he responded unmindfully but romantically.

Long, long ago there's a princess in a vast, vacant palace alone and all alone—she started with all the haste and zest of an amateur story-teller.

Ah, I see—commented the pilot pleasantly and playfully.

She was alone and alone, but, ah !—she stopped for moments— how beautiful she was!

Never more than you, my sweet swan—he quipped.

Never stop me in the middle—she protested.

No, no, you go on. Long, long ago in the vast Malay forests stood a still, solid palace of dazzling marbles, sizzling granites and sparkling sandstones......

You know much more—the sweety noted unhappily.

Er, no, you say; you really know the story and you know more perfectly how to put a story on swift rails or slow sand dunes so that it moves like a snail to the listener's pleasure or wail.

She looked askance for a few seconds. She was not delighted at the sweet flattery of the sweeter hubby so much as she was amazed at the poetic sparks of this unpoetic soul of a science student of remote Cuttack. How happy she was!

She grew up to her age and maturity all on a sudden casting away the childish apparel she donned minutes ago. She looked at him through the corner of her eye; how attractive and tall and talented a man sat so close by. She soared into immeasurable heights of romance and sensuality; he was a perfect Cupid of a woman's desire, any doubt ?

Yaar, why did you stop ? asked the jovial pilot. The tension and rigidity that were building up in him literally melted the moment she heard the sweet little cherubium start — long, long ago. He didn't want to waste the moment and the enjoyment. The Indonesian expedition would not have been really memorable but for this jungle jasmine, he reasoned to himself.

No, no; is it time for story-telling ? Look at your instruments accurately. By the by where are we now ?—she put it all curiously and consideringly.

Over Sumatra—pat came the reply, albeit a bit hoarsely.

Why ? Is there a story also ?—he smiled not at her naivety but at his good fortunes to nab this nymph from the distant Jammu and Kashmir.

So you're joking at my story-telling capacity, aren't you ? —she looked away in visible sorrow.

My good God, how dare I do that ? I can press story-tellers, stress story-tellers, caress story-tellers, smash story-tellers and crush story-tellers; but I never joke at them, poke them, fork them, and cork them right and tight, right and left when I am off my flight schedules and in my domestic modules; am I right ? —he smiled heartily, looking at the reddened face of the damsel looking away at the sky through the small window. Her self-inflicted sense of insult melted like a piece of ancient snow before a terrible flame. She smiled slowly and rousingly, but remained speechless, as if to experience the arousal more intensely, more bitingly. Even while rivetting his gaze on the maze of instruments before him, he could feel the magnificent, warm wave of quest and request rising under the bosom of the woman and to share the moment intensely and informally, he added philosophically but flippantly—Socrates, Shakespeare or Shreeharsa, I'm not sure, said women are bad when they speak and good when they sit speechless. It's not a literary outburst, I can say; it's true for all times and with all beauties, and I sincerely believe the utterance is axiomatically psychological.

Aha, ha, ha ....she burst into inordinate laughter and added immediately—I knew the bullish bull as a bunting tool, but I didn't know him as a wise owl. And my raving robber, since when did you become such a wise fool ?—she hugged him

impulsively and drowned herself with innocuous, virgin outburst. He was amused beyond measure and smiled responsively but responsibly.

Socrates spent his time, and even drank hemlock, to tame bullish bulls like you who were utter fools to fail—she continued—to identify the flower and the fossils in proper perspectives. Where did he has the time to watch Athenian belles dance on the sunny pastures or drink with bacchanalian gusto ?—she looked amusingly at his brightened face. Shreeharsha, the great Indian poet measured Indian virgins and sub-continental belles with the right measure of wit and imagination. Why would he waste his breath in unpoetic sermons or psychological statements ?—Her face glowed with the pride of an oriental scholar.

Then it's Shakespeare for sure—he joined lightly and delightfully.

Shakespeare ? He said so many things about women; never this one. He can equate women with weaklings or envious insects, but will not identify them with perpendicular pillars of ideal personality. To him virgins, maidens and married women all had the same vice of being perfidious, ambitious or jealous...........

Er, let none say so; Biju says that you mirror the Dal, the high Himalayas, the Shalimar Gardens, the Kashmir orchards and the Ladakh snow when you sit cool, when you sit silent, when you blush and when you flush, don't you ?—he said heartily.

And she really blushed in extraordinary elegance and relaxation except that she looked lustily and mischievously at him from the corner of her eye.

And the Dakota was dashing forward. The pilot was silent and sensitive most of the time and discharged his duty with so much ease and presence of mind that the bride beside couldn't make it out. To her there was deadening and dreadful silence within and deafening thunder and blinding lightning without; but

she couldn't make it out as she assumed the streaks of lightning as twinkles of the distant constellations and the deafening noise as the original and usual roar of ethereal wilderness experienced, especially, due to the break-neck speed of the aircraft. She was perturbed and panicked at the stupendous dash of the Dakota cruising through impregnable dark and intimidating roar. She longed to say a word of caution or premonition, but she refrained, knowing fully well that the beastly bull would be doubly dashing and damaging when you advise or admonish him. Speed, sport and adventure are the three things he loves, and loves like an eagle loves the height of the blue sky. It's raining in cats and dogs, and gales and hells are broken loose, she supposed. But what could be done ? Hell and honesty are the only companions of this bloody, bullish, foolish man. He wants to fly, not to sigh; and he wants to fly not like a pilot or a passenger, but like Vayu, Varuna and Indra together—to fly with force, finesse and fantasy.

Did you doze, my sweet dove ?—he asked routinely without looking at the partner co-pilot.

She was about to doze not voluntarily or lethargically, but out of a queer sense of numbness or feebleness. She woke as quickly as possible to respond—Only to keep mum to become a sweet hen.

Wau, I see—he interjected plainly and passively.

By the by, where are we ?—she asked.

Oh, surely in the delusive, dark, devilish mid-sky.

Don't think you can frighten me like a fly—she said simulatingly but with a wry on the brow. But tell me without exaggeration if there is storm or still outside.

The weather's really bad, honey—he mused pensively. The Americans say the typhoon dancing the Indonesian shores is dangerous and dangerously unpredictable; the British meteorologists say that the hurricane harries at 120 *mph* and, of

course, the Japanese believe the storm is much less furious.

At what ?—she asked quickly and nervously.

Don't get frightened, my crazy chick; they say the hurricane moves at 120 *kmh.*

He looked at the maid to study the panorama of her face. She looked up with dissimulated fear and nervousness to shout—What, I'm afraid of the thug of a storm or the wolf of a hurricane. Oh, no, no! I'm Hercules' wife; I'm wife of Arjuna, Abhimanyu's mother; storms and tempests, thunderbolts and rains, winds and havocs scarcely terrorise me, rarely terrify me, scarcely topple or tear me—she cried out hysterically.

Brouhaha! The bird caught her wings, the bird caught her wings—he exclaimed jovially.

Scene Five

Another place; about the same time. Ah, not in the air, but really on the real earth where a group of great guns were building castle in the air.

X : Great news, good news; hurrah! The day is won, we've won. Cheers for the Mahatma, cheers for Nehru !

Y : *(almost startled)* What's the fun, my friend ! Cheers for Nehru and cheers for Gandhi; and cheers for your dead body, for India has won and Indonesia has lost.

X : *(turning sharply to him)* Ah, you fool! I exactly said that India's won and Indonesia's gone; the British relented but the Dutch are undone.

Z : *(non-chalantly)* Stop emotions for commotions and commotions for emotions, you fine fools and refined friends who dance on quicksands and dash against deceptive hounds mistaking them as innocent mounds. Yet, what's the matter with both or either?

A : *(seriously)* Stop being silly, you friends. The Dutch armed forces have implanted extra-sensitive, immaculate ears in every Indonesian mud wall and your mad wails and bacchanalian drolls will be sweet music to your death's ears, you understand ?

B : Er, there's nothing new about it. The war-ravaged British government has agreed to quit India before June,1948 and Viceroy Mountbatten has emphatically assured that it's sooner than later. Given the famine staring imperialism in the face after the recent war, what's there to rejoice about? The only thing the

world has to rejoice upon is that the Mahatma is no more a theory or thread, a myth or miracle, a godhead or godsend; he's reality, he's flesh and blood, he's one and part of the vast humanity, especially, the struggling, striving, and suffering humanity. What he said he believed, what he believed he said, and what he said and believed; he acted upon to show that truth, not tanks, non-violence, not vast armies, and genuine love for your opponent, your oppressor, not sanguinary hatred, are what that pushes imperialist forces and vices from the shores of India. A hundred flowers for the Mahatma, a hundred praises for Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi and a hundred congratulations to the people of India ! But are you not startled my dear fools ?

X : *(shocked and startled, others equally nervous)* Why?

B : Oh ! the ducks are in water, the Dutch are in the air; the guns roar everywhere and the women weep the louder; yet you the freedom-fighters don't know the weather when typhoons and tornados hit us helter and skelter.

All others looked at each other with horror and what-to-do air.

Y : Tell straight what's the matter.

B : *(in inaudible whispers)* The Dutch are planning to launch the last most terrible offensive on this hideout early this morning or late next night at the latest to eliminate the leaders and managers of the movement once for all. They are afraid of the Indian spectacle and propose to crush our struggle by strangulating us or to quit as the inevitable alternative.

There is a stupefied silence like sands of the central Sahara; but immediately there's a shout.

X : *Inquilab Jindabad;* long live the movement; longer live the struggle to emancipate all Indonesians from all oppressions, all injustices. Comrades say—*Inquilab Jindabad; European*

imperialism down, down.

Z : *(agitated and protesting)* Don't make a fun of everything. You don't see the demon staring at us, our movement to devour all of us in one gulp, do you ?

X : *(excitedly) Yeah,* I see it, I see it pretty well so that I'm shouting and flouting lest doomsday and deluge should mistake us as mucous mules submitting abjectly to the cruel clutches of untimely end and timely martyrdom. Say we've won, we've won; Death and Dutch dare not to touch us. We're fighters and fairies; we're fire and sherries. Dutch, don't play with us; don't fly at us; we may die but we won't be buried.

A : *(agitatedly)* - Stop it, I say stop it. It's no time for being in a parliament or in the bedlam. Tell me where's Sukarno?

C : He left for the eastern region or so I suppose. OK that's right; except for the devil and the Dutch everybody else will love to save him in exchange of his life; and except for the hell and the Hague he could be safe wherever he may be.

Y : *(enthusiastically)* Sure, sure; now what about Hatta and Shahriyar ?

B : *(comically)* Fools that they are, they may be playing foul with fiends or fair with butterflies. Do they ever care death, disaster or danger? Send them word that their lives are in danger, they'll laugh out full-throated and reply that they're eager to marry their sweet-hearts before they share honeymoon beds with the other bride of death. Stupid saints, they love to die at the slightest pretext and when it's death in exchange for Indonesian honour, the two will fight between them to mount the gallows earlier and if the hangman tarries to fasten the noose around their neck, they'll harry him by trippling and tickling and kicking at his buttock. Didn't Sukarno say—I can kill a hundred Dutch but cannot save these foolish two from unnecessary, voluntary self-killing ?

Z : They're here and how to save their lives is the special

theory of relativity. Once you let them know that Dutch will pounce upon them tonight, they'll bounce upon you to say that Indonesia doesn't need such timid stalwarts who harangue endlessly on Indonesian independence but withdraw into convenient hiding when there's an idiot's rumour that there's danger to their life. God alone can save them !

A : *(resignedly)* Not even God, my friend ! British General Cromwell said to believe in God and keep your powders dry. Mahatma Gandhi keeps on saying that keep faith in the Almighty who makes day and night and see for yourselves that your wrong is being right and your suffering is catching flight. I can humbly say God has been immensely kind in the recent past to save us from death's jaw right and left, but this time the terrible, treacherous Dutch have laid a tantalising trap that catches us when we fly and dangles us when we sit shy.

C : Not God, but that bloody boy can save them *(He laughed at his own humour even in such a grave juncture. Others almost joined him. When—)*

X : *(pretty seriously)* Oh, sure, sure; that young, tall pilot who always puffs cigar and spouts 'bloody' 'bloody' whomever he refers can alone save Shahriyar and Hatta, I'm sure.

A sense of business like silence descended upon the whole place. Some were yet to figure out who the pilot was and how he can be useful in this critical juncture, when—

X : *(interrupting)* Eh, everybody knows him. A suave and sober priest needs no sacred thread on his erudite chest. *(Looking at others),* Don't you know him ? *(scanning the bewilderment on several faces)* —*Yaar,* he's called Bijoyananda Patnaik, a tall, strong, young man of thirty; hails from the ancient Kaling Empire and is right now the right-hand man of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Interestingly he's pilot of Royal Air Force of the British Empire but does the job of Indian Independence

movement more fully and more full-time than many full-time, professional freedom fighters. That is what people in the know of things say —young is strong, fresh is free and flamboyant, and enthusiastic is fantastic and infallible in missions and skirmishes.

Everybody seemed to recall of the young, strong and headstrong pilot and their faces beamed with unexpected and unexplained hope and hype.

Y : *(protesting)* Who doesn't know him ? *Yaar*, he's far superior to what you know. Do you know he was jailed for two years for clandestinely contributing to the spread and progress of the Indian Independence movement even when he was in the employ of the Viceroy ?

Most of them seemed to be wondering how this tall, stately, shapely pilot of RAF could himself contribute to the freedom movement of his country, risking his plum job and even life. So far what they thought of him was that he was Nehru's errand boy and unfailingly delivered Nehru's message across the world.

Z : *(in sheer exclamation)* Strange ! *(after a pause)* Are you sure he was imprisoned for playing a part in his country's freedom struggle?

Y : *(angrily)* I never tell a lie nor do I ever bluff things I don't know; but I spew fire on people who doubt the veracity of my well-researched statements. Who doesn't know that that young, strong pilot was put behind the bars on January 13, 1943 for disseminating highly seditious and inflammatory pamphlets and posters, placards and literature from the Viceroy's flight ? Who doesn't know that detailed investigation by British police and intelligence organisation discovered serious things about this pilot who was the Viceroy's blue boy ? And who doesn't know that he was imprisoned for that offence for two years ? And do you know the cruel and clever British Raj charged him with dissemination of state secrets to the enemies of the empire with

two motives — first to cover up their weakness that Indian Independence struggle has attained such momentum that sincere and loyal employees of the crown like Bijoyananda Patnaik have participated in it and secondly to detain the tall, towering, firebrand pilot as long as possible with graver charges against him ?

C : (impatiently) How did he come out ?

Y : *(raising his voice)* Not by tendering an apology nor by plundering their close-fisted pity, not even begging mercy of Lord Wavell, the Viceroy of India, who loved pilot Patnaik like a pet; but by his exceptional talent as a committed and courageous pilot and by his august and audacious attitude to problems and persons. Shall I say a story ? Long past, there was an Indian monarch named Purus who ruled the trans-Indus territories wedged between the Hindkush hills and the Arabian Sea, bordering the Persian Empire on the west. Alexander the Great, invaded Persia and pushed eastwards to annexe the vast, versatile and vivacious Indian soil to his already vast Euro-Asian empire. Mighty and dreaded empires of the glorious past like those of Greece, Rome, Egypt and Persia fell to his scoop and sweep and everyone in the vanquished kingdoms swore by their soul that India would follow suit much sooner than little later. There's panick and outcry in the habitations and hacks bordering Persia that the Greek vultures would cry out war and wry out their culture. Purus was perturbed with the realistic appraisal that his forces counted like a crow to a hawk to those of Alexander. Brave by heart, heritage and hermitage, Purus packed his herrings neatly and imaginatively planned the defence copiously but covertly, worked out military strategies in accordance with the ancient theories with suitable local, seasonal and intuitive variations, and awaited the Greek aggression. Alexander asked for quick and cordial surrender by the Indian prince to the former's honourable subjugation. Purus said no, swords and spears rattled in the August rains as if in

chime with thunder and lightning. The mighty, daunting and devastating army of Alexander with superior weaponry, skill and soldiery would have smashed the tiny Indian army ere long. But that couldn't be. The surprise of surprises is that Greek forces suffered an ignominious defeat. Alexander, the Great, heaved a sigh of despair and praised Purus profusely in the same breath. From Peshawar to Persia, from Mahanadi to Macedonia, from Rajputana to Rome — there was astonishment and disbelief that Alexander, the invincible, ate a humble pie at the hands of an Indian prince, Purus, by name.

He paused for a moment, excited and exulted. Others looked at him awe-stricken and agape. The break did not please the disciplined listeners or the possessed speaker either. He continued with a slower movement of expressions but with a loftier emotion.

Alexander was angry and agitated at the unanticipated reversal but was wary of the next operation. He was puzzled about how to tackle the tricky and treacherous terrain beyond the Indus and how to cross the mighty river before the enemy could catch a glimpse of his advancement. He could scarcely afford a second reversal, but was determined, at the same time, to make the retribution full and final so that other Indian feudal lords and feuding chieftains and kings would not grudge or growl yielding to Greek suzerainty despite no shred of supplication and in spite of the stringent instruments and conditions. And a feuding fern who went for a king as head of an adjoining kingdom and harboured the hardest grudge against Purus appeared on the scene.

Everybody shouted—O India, O !

And the speaker paused to echo their sense of sorrow silently but superbly. Not to empty the reverberating loftiness, softly but sublimely rising in his inside, he resumed —

Now that feuding fish enticed Alexander to launch the

onslaught immediately lest the Indian lion, Purus, should get time to recuperate his wounded body and regroup his disarrayed soldiers, and offered his army, weapons and foodstuff to assist the Greek forces. More important, he imparted intricate details on the contours and topography of the vast and volatile Indus basin together with exact locations of Purus' fortifications and fencings. He identified the strong and weak bastions and bases of Purus which needed to be taken care of in any offensive worth the name. Alexander, the right strategists and mighty general, did not fail to take stock of the situation by plugging his loopholes and puncturing his opponents bright spots. Needless to say in the ensuing engagement royal, Macedonian military might trampled the Indian defence quickly and comprehensively. The invading army pervaded the vast basin with gusto and gaiety, routing the opposing army ruthlessly and with might. The powerful Purus was injured and taken captive.

The listeners sighed with dejection and disappointment. Their sympathy with and appreciation for Purus crossed all limits to burst into soulful admiration and acclaim.

Almost all except the speaker thought that the story ended with enormous glory to great India and the greater Indian prince, Purus, when he added with rising voice and joyous gesture.

— Now the story begins — the listeners were nearly startled and immediately huddled with rapt attention. Alexander is seated in his modest but majestic camp overlooking sparkling blue waters of the enchanting Indus when Purus was brought before him, in chains. Turban torn, tunic shredded and body replete with multiple marks of injury, Purus looked downcast and hung as much out of exhaustion as of shame. The solitary thought— Who's the lowly, fallen betrayer that sold Indian secrets to the intruding alien general—possessed him; that he was facing Alexander scarcely scared him or diverted his attention.

So you're the king—shouted the Macedonian monarch inoffensively but eccentrically.

' Yes, I'm—pat came the reply.

And your name ?—the monarchical question was archaical and arduously assertive.

Purus—the reply was short, stately and straightforward, but exceptional.

How do you desire to be treated ?—asked Alexander easily but intelligently.

Like a king—Purus shot back promptly and positively, not playfully nor desperately.

O, sure, sure; you're a king, a great Indian king; my friend, the great Purus—Alexander shouted with joy and embraced the king deeply and for quite some time.

Spectators and soldiers, commanders and casuals all celebrated the scene with rapturous screams and shouts of glory and greatness to both.

There's deep silence in this camp of Indonesian freedom fighters who meditated upon the ancient Indian legend with awe, amazement and alacrity. They've forgotten by then that hero of the story was to be Bijoyananda Patnaik, not Purus or Alexander. The speaker appeared to be depleted of language and ideas. With his literary talents he could see in his mind's eye the picturesque Indus basin over two millennium ago with soldiers, swords, shafts, crafts, camps, canopies, horses, camels, buckets and baskets dotted hither and thither regularly and irregularly where Alexander and Purus, the victor lion facing the wounded tiger, are parleying and positioning accurately and artistically. He was interrupted in his thought, when—

B : *(rather stoically)* Purus was set free grandly; now what about Patnaik, the pilot ?

Z : *(slowly but distinctly)* Biju was set free in that analogy,

can't you see ?

B : Why Biju intervenes first and are the British as magnanimous as Alexander, the great ?

Z : Ah, Biju is, for short, the tall, tawny and temperamental pilot; his parents and friends and brothers and sisters all call him so. The nickname is really great. And nickname-wise they're George, Biju and Siju, the three brothers, eh.

B : Giju, Biju, Siju — good, great, I see.

A : Tell how he was set free.

Z : It's simple, in fact simpler than we can imagine. You know he flew the Viceroy and became the pet pilot of Lord Wavell, the Viceroy of India. He vacillated for long to order for his arrest and imprisonment on charges of sedition or treason though Viceroys are never niggardly in ordering arrest and imprisonment of their personal staff when they were accused of inimical acts against the British Empire. Ultimately he agreed to Biju's arrest only as a design to boost the tattering morale of the Britons in India who were under tremendous and tyrannical pressure by the stupendous upsurge of patriotism in India and who were further demoralised by the sad and bad news from warfronts in Europe where the Germans and Italians were beating the French and the Britons like an enraged cock trampling a poor, panicked, little hen. But how can Wavell do without Biju ? The tall, tell-tale Indian pilot endeared himself so much to him that he was on the look out for an alibi to set him free and that occasion arose about two years later when Biju complained of chronic chest pain. Wavell immediately ordered that the pilot be at large on parole for cure and convalescence.

C : Ah, he really fooled the foolhardy British.

Y : *(almost jumping to his feet)* You fool, never utter a word like that. Biju is not mean or meandering. Should he have approached or appealed to Wavell, should he have apologised to

the imperial authorities or should he have addressed his not-guilty' to the *Pheeringi* police, he would have been discharged in the first place. He is not only headstrong, but honest to the hilt. He knows that he did something wrong or illegal in the prevailing format of law and order and was prepared to undergo the punishment for that. But he really couldn't bear the strains and stings and stinks of a jail cell. As you know cigar smoke escapes his lips like non-stop smoke from a chimney and you know that he tallies with any RAF pilot or British lieutenant in cocktails and drinking, how can he then escape from cardiac trouble and destiny?

Everyone seemed to believe the plausible story of the rare gesture of humanism shown by the shrewd British in releasing Biju on parole.

A : *(dramatically and forcefully)* You hackneyed monkeys and donkeys are drizzling praises and doodling tales on the doughty, haughty, naughty Indian pilot. What about your own freedom fighters about to die by the double-biting Dutch ?

X : O, sure, we're sorry. That young, angelic pilot certainly softens your stress and flattens your anxiety when you fix your ears to his adventures and assortments. Now really, what about Hatta and Shahriyar ?

B : Yeah, that young, strong, angelic pilot would descend like a vulture and pluck Shahriyar and Hatta high into the sky, nay, right into *Nai Dilli*, the capital of Independent India, golden India, Ancient India, everlasting India...........

Y : *(annoyed)* Don't indulge in double-Dutch unnecessarily and monotonously, we at least have no ear to your fiddling when Djakarta is burning.

Z : *(in haste)* It's true. But if you don't mind I'll tell something that's really nice, but I know not if it's true.

Others looked at him approvingly, but not excitingly. He continued — And they say his wife hails from Kashmir, from a

hamlet by the bank of the beautiful Dal and is, unlike the torrid, tall pilot, a genius of art and music.

That he may be interrupted as there's no enthusiastic response to what he said, he added rather hurriedly. She's a poet of sorts, a painter of class and a pianist at her best, they say. It's natural, I think. Born by the blue waters of the world-famous Dal surrounded by apple orchards and flower gardens, snow-capped hills and cool, crystal streams; awoke daily into cool, clear, cajoling dawn, and the paragon of beauty she is, they say, she must excel in the art that she gives her feather-soft finger touch. Kashmiri belles, they say, are apple-supple and crimson in the exterior and enchantingly angelic and artistic in the interior.........

C : *(comically)* So the tall, tasteless, inarticulate Kaling bull makes the perfect pair with a short, supple, artistic Kashmiri belle, am I joking?

Y : No, you're not certainly joking; you're only envious that a beleaguered bean like you has been waiting and waiting for an Indonesian belle that's wandering and blundering in the central Javan jungles, *hey ai eyei....... (laughs)*.

A : *(angrily)* Shut up, shut up, you bloody fools. I don't think Shakespeare will pick up you for the role of a pimp or pander, or Kalidas will honour you for the character of a buffoon or bore; you burglars and beggars, gossiping and gesticulating about beauties and belles even when your life is in danger and your mission is in jeopardy.

They dispersed. A sense of responsibility and immediacy percolated their whole being. The jest and joking of the minute by seemed to be the umpteen flicker of a dying candle. In fact, all through a terrible sense of failure and frustration furrowed their faces, which could not be hidden by the voluntary outbursts and laughter. Just a few strides out of the hut, B and Y returned gently to it —

B : *(slowly but seriously)* How I wish Jawahar knew of the Dutch design.

Y : I'm sure he's aware of our predicament.

B : But how ?

Y : *(coolly)* Jawaharlal is a shrewd, sophisticated and sensitive statesman. He has his ear in every quarter across the world. The Americans, the Germans, the Russians and the Japanese — all of them — part their information with him so far as it relates to India, Indonesia or colonial struggle anywhere in the world. Who of them doesn't believe that Jawahar is the pearl, the light, the pillar of the modern, the democratic and the liberated world ? By sharing international secrets with him, all European powers and all trans-Atlantic states are in bad hurry to curry his favour and seek his support. The approach of the man, you see, excels and exceeds that of a thousand Truman and a million Munroe; he beats Churchill in the sheer sheen of diplomacy and befriends Stalin with surprising disclosures of I-know-yous.

B : *(interrupting)* Do you think he devises a way to bail us out ?

Y : *(pensively)* Right now I'm in the dark as you; I can't figure out any such possibility. But he couldn't be indifferent or indolent to our plight. If we can build a castle in the air, he'll be right there to consecrate it with holy water and enshrine the right goddess there; he's such an all-weather friend of us Indonesians.

B : *(enthusiastically)* If only that tawdry, tall pilot joins hands with him.......

Y : *(failing to understand)* ......hm........*yeah, yeah.*

Z : *(who joined then by them, softly)* The Indian mythology has an eminent story for identical circumstances. Krishna, the Yadav king of Dwaraka on the western coast, is the Almighty incarnate. Non-believers and notorious souls down the ages disparage the deities that fellow-men adore and deride the

divine injunctions and instruments that neighbours adhere to. Rumkini, the princess of a central Indian principality, loved Krishna from the bottom of her heart not out of ordinary maiden infatuation for his manly magnificences and heroic handsomeness but of her realisation that he was the supreme god in human skin, and her marriage with him meant her deliverance from the cyclic tangle of rebirth, misery, death *ad infinitum.* Krishna, the knower of all, did not fail to know that though they lived in separate palaces hundreds miles apart, but, like other cases, here he wanted to test her temerity and intensity in love and surrender to him. As such, he did not lend her a helping hand till the eleventh hour though she sent *SOS* several times and was on the brink of bursting and blowing out to splinters. Her brother, the wild and wicked, who always threw a gauntlet to the glory and grandeur of Krishna, connived with Rukmini's marriage with a neighbouring king, Sisupal, in secret and conspiratorial negotiations. Garlanded gaudily and looking around arrogantly and bloodily, Sisupala arrived and sat upon the altar beside the bride, Rumkini, sobbing and surrendering silently within to omnipotent Krishna. She was terrified at the horrible speed of the ceremony conducted by her devilish brother, but was unwavering and confident that Krishna would show his miraculous power and magical feat to lift her from the altar and she raised up her left hand upwards without anybody's seeing so as they were in the thick of the uproarious celebrations of the wedding. And Krishna, the most punctillious of all punctual persons would be never late for a moment, though he never arrives at any engagement a second sooner due to his pressing and plethoric preoccupations. He charioteered all the way from Dwaraka to Kundi kingdom in his sleek, sizzling, agile chariot, descended his Dakota right on the altar and pulled Rumkini by the left hand, and rose up in the midair with outstanding manoeuvring majesty. All and sundry on the ground saw it with unbelievable eyes and shouted

in anger and anguish and astonishment and opposition making the altar and nearby grounds a veritable pandemonium.

Y : *(with broad smiles)* And so you believe the modern-day Krishna who is a veteran pilot and lives far away in Delhi will fly his Dakota to rescue us Rumkinies in utter distress?................*ha, ha, ha*..................

B : *Brouhaha*..........

Y : But comely cousin, I know that Krishna always acted and reacted only when his elder brother Balarama instructed, directed, advised, aided and abetted. I don't suppose your pilot Krishna will fly here suo moto, will he ?

By then all others have rejoined and been reanimated with Indian legends and their viciously vague hopes.

A : (*animatedly*) Yes, now you see it for yourself. Jawahar is the Balarama, the monarch of Delhi; and this tender, slender, no-blunder Kaling pilot is at his beck and call. If Nehru says go, he never says no; if Jawahar bids him fly, he never says 'nai'; if Nehru says do or die, he replies do and die. Ah, would the pearl and the oyster join in this juncture of Indonesian crisis !

X : There was vast and various prospects that we could be saved; only time flew before we knew. Anyway, now we can only contemplate about Indian Krishna, Kartikeya, Puspakayana before pounded to dust by the devilish Dutch.

Scene Six

We have rose up into the air from the humble Indonesian shack below where we watched revolutionaries and rioters were lightening their crisis and calamitous misery with superb, sensible, jokes and enlightened, intelligent Indian fables and facts. Are the couple in the Dakota sleeping and snoring, or fondling and frolicking ? Let's see.

—Has the storm stopped outside, I think so.

—When you think the tempest will vanish, the clouds will clear, the wind will run and there'll be bright, white sun, my sunny sunshine and fun.

— Don't tease and please me, tell is't the day-break ?

— How can I say ? I'm very much there where you're inside the drawling, dragon Dakota.

— Eh, don't be irritated for nothing. Ah ! there're buildings and trees and structures and rivers and lakes and forests and fields aplenty and aplomb...........

— No, there's night and storm, sea and shores, volcanos and vultures, devil and the Dutch and the poor Indonesians, of course.

Ah, no, no; there're towers and tombs, mansions and minarets, fields and farms, early birds and late loafers. We've reached, we've reached Indonesia, the destination, my dream land, the great and glorious homeland to millions and millions of innocent and industrious Indonesians ! *Joie de vivre* ! I've come, I've

come to the Indonesia of *jet d'ea and jeunesse doree* ! *Wah, wah, wah* !

— Stop shouting and skipping you silly sparrow, what do you know of Indonesia, what have you seen of Indonesia ? You started from Indonesia, you're flying over Indonesia and you're yet to reach the centre, what to speak of the eastern border ....

— Stop, you bat of a pilot. Don't befool me, don't question my knowledge of geography. I know, I know for certain that Indonesia is long, Indonesia is great and Indonesia is vast. I know, I know that the archipelago of Indonesia dots the Indian ocean like gems on the crown of Lord *Jagannatha* of *Pursottama*; I know, I know that the archipelago is as long as the tail of the *'Airavata'*; I know I know that the archipelago is the tail of the formidable mermaid that inhabits and haunts the whole of the Indian ocean; I know, I know that the archipelago is the tail of the primordial fish that clothed *Isvara Vishnu* who killed the demon '*Sankha*' who stole away Brahma's 'Vedas'; and I know, I know that the archipelago is the tail of the fabled, fishy fish that hid itself in the *Manasarovara* and heard the secret spiritual diction that *Shankara* discoursed to mother *Gouri*.

She almost swooned with a kind of divine joy and zeal and repeated 'I know, I know' slowly, sensibly. The youthful bride was glowing with colour and grace of an unique kind and the pilot beside seemed to be drawing in the woman's beauty and bonanza in deep and brisk breaths. For several seconds he was unaware that his lady love was lying fainted and famished. The fragrance of her flowery face exuded a flavour for a frenzied soul, a fanatical male. Her entire body lying sleepy, silent and suffused, emitted rays of extraordinary grace and immense ease. The young pilot pondered where this mermaid was so long. He was so near the *Shatarupa*, yet so far. The Adam in him prompted and pressurised

him to ally and align with the Eve intensely and for eternity. Fie; this is an aircraft. And lo ! she's lying speechless and motionless. He drizzled driplets of cold water on her reddish golden face and watched with joy that she rose up slowly but vivaciously.

And by the time the dangling droplets were drained out, she was fully back in her senses and bliss and delight, you can say, and shouted again and coherently — And I know, I know Indonesia is full of ivory towers and stately towers, full of fantastic fiords and fatiguing forests, full of tall palms and thorny bushes, full of gorgeous gorges and bewitching springs, full of minerals and oils, full of pachyderms and pigeons, full of rice fields and sugarcane patches and full of enticing valleys and elusive hill-tops. And I know, Indonesia is abundantly beautiful, graceful, clear, clean, idyllic and elegant; and I know, I know Indonesia boasts of a rich past and is entitled to a richer future................

She stopped on her own, the pilot looking at her sharply and affectionately. She paused for several minutes before she sighed— Oh, how I wish I had my brush and board with me to paint this landscape till I die !

— Painters don't die, I suppose, more so when they dribble and scribble dots and dates, lines and rhymes on their boards.

— No, I don't wish to die; I don't long to live; I will to paint and to paint Indonesia with the colour of my skin, with the brush of my brain, with the strength of my man, and with the dignity of my nation. I long to daub Indonesia, the princess of the Pacific, the queen of the Indian ocean; I wish to paint Indonesia standing and smiling on the rich and resplendent shores of the placid and pleasant Pacific; I desire to dabble the archipelago with chromes and cares that Indonesia's staring and daring the tempestuous and tumultuous Indian ocean with defiance and derision, and I wish to picture Indonesia as a proud, pristine princess of the East lounging

lazily, loitering easily and chattering breezily alone and all alone in the long, lonely, idle and idyllic beaches when the gods above are descending slowly but serenely with outstretched hands and outspoken demands to woo and win the winsome Indonesia saying no, no, no to one and all gaily and glisteringly.

— *Yaar*, instead of painting, you're being poetical and lyrical, that too in the mid-air. Are you in your senses ?

— No, no, no, I'm not in my senses, darling ! I'm really not in my senses. I was not in my senses when I was a sweet sixteen and leaped over the Dal from houseboat to houseboat, jogging with and hugging men, women and children of all clothes and all colours. I was not in my senses, darling, when I was on the clear, crystal, enthralling, enticing, placid, blue Dal water that absorbed and reflected millions and millions of streaks and freaks of rich, radiant hues as a faithful caretaker and copier of the adorable humans whose apparels and appearances proclaimed that they are men and women and children of this mother earth and have thronged to this paradise on earth to bask in the sweet, soft spring sunshine, to dance on the bedecked decks of Dal houseboats and to range, rove, roll and reel in the riot of colours of the Shalimar garden, and to rejoice and relax into the ancient, ubiquitous, obsessive and possessive pristine flora and fauna of Jammu and Kashmir state. I was out of my senses, darling, when I was a little, bumpy, duckling hopping from field to field, orchard to orchard, alley to alley in the glowing, glamorous Kashmir spring when the mischievous, adolescent Himalayan sun would be kissing apples, oranges, pears and bunches of grapes hanging from trees and creepers, when the exotic, erotic sun would be kissing the pink cheeks of the sheepish Ladakhi virgins goading their herds of bright, wheatish sheep treading and trampling the dustless and demure pasture wedged between silence and snow, and when the sun, robust and reckless like my tall, topless Kaling bull, would be

shearing, tearing, curing and caring the careless, callous, captivating snow on the Himalayan peaks and slopes, ridges and cliffs...................

Eh, the sun is there, you see it's there........

— And it's not the esoteric or exquisite Himalayan sun; it's tender and infantile like our rose-cheeked little one away home.

— Hey, hey, hey.......you're really great, you're truly great, you're more a poet than a pilot and more a painter than a poet.

— Hi, hi, hi.....And a pianist at my most.

— No wonder, not only a pianist, but a violinist, a flutist and even a pindar.

— *Waw, waw, waw*....not of the earth , but of the mid-air.

— Certainly, of Apollo, Hyperion and Martian genre.

— So you've forgotten the sun and have concentrated upon your man ?

— Where's the fun ? What does a woman do without her man ? The hen runs after the cock, not the cock after the hen. From sun to son there is the man, the woman's man. The man is the sun, the storehouse of all energy and all fun and the woman's the transformer, the hightension transmission line and the little fluorescent bulb all in one.

— All's well that ends ill and now I'm in the lion's den. Do you catch it my golden hen ?

Scene Seven

Now we can join the earth and the air, the Dutch and the Dakota, the Indian pilot and the Indonesian freedom fighters...... The list could be endless. You know for certain that the earth and the ether are as inexorably related as milk and water and we would be doing them injustice and disservice by keeping them apart any longer and any further. Furthermore they have already reached each other and embraced each other. So double up; let's, at least, be mute spectators to their terse and timid and passionate affair.

Dawn is breaking grandly and splenderously over Indonesian landscape. Storm and thunder-tossed trees and orchards seemed to be breathing peacefully and privately. Tree-tops and leaves, buds and blossomings, flowers and fruits, bushes and creepers in their stately and sweety best seemed to fondle and dangle the crystal dew driplets. Smokes and hazes were wrestling and wrangling as softly and swiftly as they could to create worsted texture of an immaculate screen. Birds starving and staggering with the incessant rain and hurricane for the past several hours started off their nests with joyous chirping and captivating twittering, hopeful of a rich harvest during the day. Curls of smoke from chimneys and ovens were rising monotonously as usual, but clearly, visibly. The pilot and his partner were in different but defiant moods; neither wary or worried of the censequences. The tall, tremendous pilot wore the look of a titanic talisman, absolutely oblivious to the probable perils, as if he regularly flew a chartered

airliner to the death-trap as his favourite destination. The poetic and pianist co-pilot seemed to be sunken deep down, down the inviting and captivating day-breaking landscape of beautiful Indonesia. She was so much possessed by the profound and pleasant dawn panorama of pretty Indonesia that she even forgot of the mission and the possible menace. Otherwise she may have screamed and quivered to see the Dutch sentry and patrol parties here and there.

The pilot aware of the Dutch defence posts and establishments as his three R's was risking his life and his mission by alighting the aircraft with adroit manoeuvre and mind-boggling skill, because he was between scylla and charybdis and closed all the exit routes behind him, so to say. The only sensible and responsible option available to him, he mused, was to softland the devilish Dakota with angelic silence and suppleness behind the half-closed, half-open, heavy-drunk, heavy eyes of the Dutch defence patrol, lift the freedom-fighters like plucking pretty roses and depart with demonic dash. He cursed the typhoon and tempest that stopped suddenly and unkindly. The charm of snatching the Indonesian patriots amidst thunder and lightning would have been more memorable, more thrilling and more convenient. Darkness and night moving hand in hand with torrents and tornado would have appalled the ghosts of the mid-air, beasts of the dense jungle, Dutch soldiery in pitched tents, but would have gladdened and maddened Biju, the devil's debonair, and would have made the operation easier, he thought to himself he didn't mind crushing himself and his partner for all lives and all universes in this notable and noble operation, but he was saddened to think that so many valiant and victory-chasing illustrious sons of great Indonesia be pounded and pulverised to imperceptible dust particles if the prying and prowling eyes of the Dutch guards catch sight of the Dakota in the act of the rescue operation.

There's no scope to hide or fly, there's the only betokening to jump and die. Of course, Biju won't die of aircrash..... He shook himself visibly as if to cast off any premonition or plausibility of any aircrash and the co-pilot down with and drowned in the exquisite, exotic and exhilarating early morning elements of Indonesia shook herself to regain her down-to-earth position and composure.

What happened ? —she questioned slowly as she was not still then back from the mirage and magic that was Indonesian dawn.

Nothing, we've reached our destination.

Don't shout, don't shriek; behave properly, don't be childish — he threw the instructions, or say injunctions, sternly while grounding the Dakota in a suitable shadowy, non-suspect location near the hut.

The Indonesian nationalists were all asleep out of exhaustion. They talked and debated about possible escapes and encounters, but were fully worn out when the harsh but honest conclusion was reached that they couldn't throw dust in the Dutch eyes nor could they be rescued by any foreign friends, especially Indians, due to the short span of time and to the secrecy associated with the heinous conspiracy. The majority of the movement leaders were firm and fanatical to swear death by Dutch guns and explosives. They reasoned coherently and congruously but insanely and sentimentally that Indonesians hate cowardice and escape for fear of death, that too, death caused by the sworn enemy and shameless oppressor. They quoted history and cited legends where martyrs embraced death, like pilgrims embracing the '*Garudastambha*' in front of Lord *Jagannath* at *Puri*, Orissa, in the cause of the honour and renown of Indonesia. Some of them argued in the heat of the moment to turn down Pandit Nehru's offer of assistance and escape if it came even in the unlikeliest

moment or manner. The firebrands of them proclaimed that they wouldn't die to elicit international sympathy and support for their cause, but would die to demonstrate to the world that Indonesians chase death, like little village lasses chasing butterflies, at the right moment for the right cause. When it is the case of safeguarding the dignity of the motherland or freeing the motherland from the cursed clutches of alien rulers, the Indonesians of the rich and golden past have invited and indulged in death. Finally the whimper and the whine ended with reiteration of the primordial conviction that the gods of Indonesia, the forefathers of Indonesians, have always protected her true sons, her worthy sons. Were they the devoted sons of the country, they would never be eliminated or ejected by any power on earth. And they slept, they slept peacefully; their faces effusive of extraordinary ease and illumination due to the cool and comely dawn breeze announced to the world wide awake or deep asleep that the whorl did not desire to hide from ominous, imminent death but death was dwarfed and was on the hiding.

Sit here, silent but dignified, instructed the pilot business-like and hurriedly.

Yeah, like Casablanca not leaving the ship......... she quipped quickly but comically, not withstanding her realisation that they were in the dragon's den or devil's pen.

Stop being utterly stupid. Like Sita not leaving the 'Ashokavana' until Rama came there with the mighty Hanuman— he murmured minutely but movingly while proceeding towards the nearby hut.

Hallo, Indonesian friends, best of a good morning!
Will you rise or go on dreaming and dreaming indefinitely
in the sweet slumber even though the Dutch becoming
closer and closer to pound you to graphite powder?

Almost all of them woke up as if from a trance and all

those who were straight face to face with the tall talisman were boggled and baffled for quite several minutes. They were bewildered with strange sensation of scare and stupor; they couldn't stare or strike nor could they stray and sight. They were aware he wasn't the devil or his agent, but they couldn't believe that the tall, stupendous, talisman of a pilot was present before their very eyes. They couldn't shout and scream in joy nor could they sigh and despair in agony of the impending danger. India is the land of miracles and magic, they construed in chime, and it's possible that the tall, terrible, trustworthy Indian pilot can descend from the thin air in this odd hour to save them from the engulfing inferno.

— Please come with me quickly and silently. I don't have to reiterate that your very life is in certain danger. Hope I'm not being the tough guy I'm usually labelled to be.

— No, no, you kind Biju. We know you, we know you, the bosom friend of us Indonesians — whispered one. But what really is the matter ? — he questioned quickly.

— It's terrible, it's all terrible. Our information is that the Dutch are after your pound of flesh as Shylock was for that of Antonio. They want to gnash you and smash you once for all and splinter and shatter Indonesian freedom movement by splattering your blood on every Indonesian street and hut, factory and farm, temple and tavern, do you understand my friend ? Be quick please, there's no time at all — he whispered lowly but fluently while scampering along ahead of them.

— That's true, that's true — they spoke in unison like a note to the tune and followed him in haste and hush.

They boarded the Dakota and the ready pilot started the engine which hooted and whistled rather noisily as if to exhibit *vini vidi vici* and the sound of success and jubilation as made by his faithful Dakota woke up many Indonesians and a number of Dutch sentry men. While the Indonesians, boys and girls

particularly, shouted at the early morning farewell of the (possibly friendly) aircraft and waved their hands in gesturing overjoyed bidding, the Dutch army was startled at the stark violation of Dutch air space by an Indian aircraft. From sentry to commander the hierarchical communication through walkitalkies and air scurried and hurried in whimpers and flurries. The soft, thick spiral of smoke trailing the fleeing Dakota dominated and distinguished itself among the columns of smoke rising from chimneys or peasants' homes. The bursque and blasting sound caused by the domineering and dainty Dakota frightened twitching and timid bird circles which swirled and swung in appalling commotion and endless emotion. Early-rising Indones ian workers and farmers, women and the old as many as happened to see the draconian Dakota piercing into the Indonesian clouds a breast of cloudy, white trail of smoke wondered about the enviable expertise of the pilot who dropped his aircraft like the Newtonian apple, picked the Indonesian freedom fighters huddled and hounded and severed from helping hands like Selkeirkian shipwrecks from the vast, bluish waters of Dutch sentry, and blasted off the aircraft again like an Indian *haveli*.

Wild rumours soon spread amidst willing Indonesian commonalty that that tall, titanic pilot who walks like a colossus and gazes like Jews and dashes like Venus and moves like Mars who flew into dreaded Japanese garrisons and cantonments, positions and prisons and airlifted British citizenry shouting SOS advented at that auspicious Indonesian dawn with his homely wife as co-pilot and airlifted the valiant revolutionaries at the twinkling of an eye and before the ever-vigilant Dutch could bat an eye lid. They gossiped with glee and gaiety that the Dutch plotted to blow the hut by the early morning to turn Hatta and Shahriyar and co to strands and shreds so that the Indonesian dream for independence would have been bruised and battered for good to irrecoverable

paralysis. They whispered in hushes, though occasionally in peals of laughter and surges of clatter, that Pandit Nehru is omniscient to know the Dutch design before it was hatched; while the Dutch were working out their diabolical details of destruction and deluge, Nehru was smiling and betraying a sense of ignorance and indifference about the entire affair. They argued and imagined that the tempestuous, tall Indian pilot was Nehru's weapon and wisdom, messenger and message, commander and courier, counsellor and do-gooder....... all in one, and, they continued, Nehru was sure that his trustworthy, tenacious, tall pilot would alight at the right moment and save the endangered Indonesian revolutionaries. And that exactly happened, they concluded with sigh of relief and sensations of joy.

The knowledgeable few quoted sloka 71, chapter II of the Bhagvat Gita that says that an extraordinary worker works when others sleep and sleeps when others are wide awake and they stretched the analogy extraordinary to equate the tall pilot with the hallowed, holy worker of the sloka. The knowledgeable few figured it finely and faultlessly that the fantastic, tall pilot flew his aircraft when all Indians, all Singaporeans, all Dutch and all Indonesians were sleeping and snoring or dreaming or somnambulating, and thunder and typhoon, winds and sky-snakes were wrestling and raking the sky, the air and the earth.

Not to be outwitted by the spunks of geography, the spunks of history heralded that the tall, titanic was certainly greater than and superior to all the stalwarts of history. To illustrate, they said, he is far notable than Ashok, Alexander, Augustus, Julius Caesar, Antony, Charlemagne, Canute, Napoleon. The only thing in which he contradistinguishes in the galaxy of history's greats is that he lacks devilish, annexationist or anarchical political ambition. Those who know ABC of world history said with final finesse that he inherits and exhibits all the great and noble virtues of Ashok,

Alexander, Arthur, Augustus and Antony in that he knows no terror, no timidity, no feeling of failure. In courage and conviction he shares the dias with Fredrick or Peter or Bismarck or Cavour. The spunk of an Indologist fluttered suddenly and with a bunch of flatters said that he is the son of his father and being laughed at by others, thundered — Do you know what happened ?

— What happened ? — many inquired in a tremendous chorus.

— He's young, a highschool student, you know — he stopped briefly.

— Mahatma Gandhi visited Cuttack, the oldest and greatest city of Orissa, the most ancient and the oldest city of the world, the capital and symbol of the great Kalingan empire, the cultural capital of present Orissa, the hub, the throb and the vivre of Orissa's customs and cunning and crafts and culture and history and heritage and humanism and religion and movements and organisations and organic evolution and agitaion, and stayed in the Swarajya Bhawan, the den and dome of revolutionaries and Indian freedom fighters.

— I know Cuttack, I know — one shouted at the top of his voice and continued unabated — it's a great and beautiful city wedged and encircled by rivers Mahanadi and Kathojodi. The two mighty rivers, the latter is the daughter of the former, are wreaths of flowers on the neck of the goddess of the city and you know the pleasant vernal zephyr blowing over the vast virgin expanse of shiny, butter-soft sands of Mahanadi and Kathajodi kissing the mangoes and guavas, jackfruits and banyans, peepals and sals, creepers and grass of nearby villages, and the daffodils and jasmines on the scattered and cake-like raparine deltas is the thing that paradise doesn't have and the spring especially earmarks for Cuttack and '*Cuttackias.*'

— *Yeah, yeah*, that's that — interrupted the first speaker

and added — Mahatma Gandhi; much to his chagrin and dislike, was elevated to the status of the Mahatma by the Indians by the time he visited the city. The Indians wondered how there could be an Indian that questioned the authority of the British and that could speak of a simple movement to throw the British lock, stock and barrel from the soil of India. His voice of non-violence and his precept of sticking to truth as weapons to fight the British which picked and plucked from the venerated Vedas and Upanisadas, legends and folklores, touched the right chord among the Indian masses who felt resuscitated by the resurrection of their old values and older truths. At his Cuttack sojourn, it's natural that teeming thousands of men and women, old and children, peasants and rickshaw-pullers, students and barristers, 'satyagrahis' and freedom-fighters, vendors and tailors, landlords and tillers, quacks and singers, sportstars and 'fakirs' thronged the roads and lanes, bylanes and alleys, buildings and rooftops and rafts and tree-tops with curiosity and wonder. The entire town looked swollen, like a plenitude of multi-coloured balloons dangling and dancing in vernal Cuttack air, presenting a feast of a spectacle to the eye of the passer-by and onlooker. The huge crowd chuckled and crackled and chalked out a plan how to see the great Mahatma to heart's fill. The eager and frenzied spectators stirred and strained the nerves of the limited police in charge of the gathering. The poor Oriyas, always afraid of the British police for their merciless lathi and beating and their stiff muscles and shameless face, were ardent and adamant that day to have a glimpse of Gandhi, come what may. The lathi-wielding, babbling blasting, bewildered British police shouted at and pushed the surging crowd from the gates and frontage of the Swarajya Bhawan, but to no avail. The youth and highschool students, earnest and robust and sweetly mischievous, wanted to play hide and seek with their British '*mamas*'. They surged ahead like waves of a roaring sea when the police on the

particular position was unalert or inert and receded back, very much like the high-rising waves of the Bay of Bengal on the Puri coast, when the police whirled their lathis and aimed at them. While retreating to safer places, the chubbies and rubbies of admirable students and adorable youth of the then India burst into laughter and cracked endless jokes. What's evident on their nose-tips and transparent on the supple muscles of their faces was— we've won and won by deceiving the bloody British as they did our [illegible] ago.

[illegible] p[illegible] for moments to inhale heavily [illegible] morning air laden with rich and noble spirit of eter[illegible] [illegible]donesia.

— Go on, please — implored the audience feverishly.

— This tall pilot was a student then and tall too, hey.....hey....hey... — he burst and the morning air vibrated with his hyperactive humour and hilarious laughter, and his listeners joined him in a well-orchestrated chore.

— En core, en core, — someone shouted from behind.

— The teddy, tall pilot — he continued with a smile still playing on his pleasant face— shouted at his friends for being foolish and finicky. He shouted — Why're you frolicking like this, let's move ahead and see the Mahatma. He's our Mahatma, our father's Mahatma, our motherland's Mahatma. What the bloody British police have to do with that to stop and forbid us from seeing him face to face ?

— And you know Biju — joined a chap — Mahatma loves students from the bottom of his heart. He says that learning and youthful energy are the pillars of strength of any society, any state.

— You stupid chap — shouted back Biju—the Mahatma doesn't mean learning the three R's in school or college as learning nor does he mean youthful energy as resident in adolescents

and youths. To him learning is raking, reminiscing and remembering the virtues, values and valiance of one's past and one's ancestors and youthful is he who adopts to and adheres plain living and high thinking. The Mahatma hates the youth who eat like buffalos, ruminate toffees and chocolates like cattle, play and foray like crickets and grass-hoppers, plunder their father's pockets and squander the money on exotic crazes and fads like purchasing Valentine gifts and New Year greeting cards. The Mahatma considers him youthful — he raised his voice in an ennobling manner — who acts like an ant in his late eighties and strides like a giant in his late nineties, who reads and writes even through blurred specks and exhausted wicks, who prays and meditates amidst blistering snow-storms and desiccating, scorching sun, who prides in the prestige of his race and stock and owns up his national weakness and pitfalls with bravery and ease, and who dies for his motherland like Abhimanyu died for the Pandavas and for the establishment of the empire of piety and justice. The Mahatma wants us students to be—he proclaimed with the deepest conviction — bigs not wigs, heroes not zeroes, divine not devil, high not shy, rich and beautiful not poor and ugly, and proud as Indian, not pusillanimous pitiable, wretched imitators and foreign fans ! And now move on — he exhorted the couple of classmates around him—in the real Gandhian fashion, like lion cubs and Haryana bulls, without fear and fuss to have a close view of the Mahatma, the greatest of the great souls that have ever put foot on this ancient, historical and grand city of Cuttack. Let's not miss this opportunity of meeting with the Mahatma who's so busy that he may be next minute off, disappointing us for ever. Er — he exploded — we may have a lot of time and chances to meet the Mahatma in future, but why, why wait so long ? Why not today, right now, see Gandhi and enrich our sight and senses with the enviable 'darshana' of the miraculous Mahatma.

— Yes, right now, why not ? — thundered his friends, even the timid sparrows among them. And they moved ahead — *the Indonesian speaker was narrating*- like a well-knit ball of worsted silken yarn or a well-bundled bushel of ripe and rich sheaths of corn, caring none but themselves.

— Stop, stop you bloody boys — shouted the police sergeant Haggard at the top of his voice, seeing them move menacingly as if to gatecrash and see Gandhi. The other police around playing their lathis playfully showered *tom-toms* on the hairy or bald heads of the spectators and the students. When this group was close to the gate the police showered their lethal lathis on the small, soft heads of Biju's friends. They being shorter and intent upon avoiding the trepidation of the terrible lathi on the crop of hair atop their body, sank lower. Biju, the tall and always averse to lowering his head at any cost, did not mind Haggard's howling, outcry and heckling lathi creating ripples in the air. Soon a stupendous and stubborn strike from the lifeless and merciless stick kissed the semi-bald head of the stubborn, tall Biju. Oh — he yelled in anger and agony while droplets of blood oozed out in streaks and trickled on to his broad shoulders and wide chest via the forehead and the ears. When can I throw these bloody brutes — he whispered to himself ferociously and in utter agony. Haggard, the British bully, was quick to pick up the thread and pushed and beat the crowd right and left to decongest and decogulate the frontage once for all so that Gandhi would be far off his dear people.

Biju returned home, bleeding but not sad — added the Indonesian story-teller—and met with father Laxminarayan Patnaik at the entrance of his Anand Nivas house at Tulsipur, Cuttack. Without a figment of frown or fury, the senior Patnaik asked — Did you pay the offender in the same coin ? Is he bleeding more profusely than vou manikin ?

No— replied the junior Patnaik plainly and matter-of-factly. It's Haggard, the lathi-wielding British sergeant controlling crowd at Swarajya Bhawan — he added.

Haggard or hell, makes no difference — LNP shouted furiously and frantically— they've no business to stop Oriyas from seeing Gandhi and in beating the youngsters in course of the foolery like they beat offenders and gangsters. My son must maintain a '*muskil*' frame and flatten the flea-bitten British pigs when the occasion.....— he sighed and remained silent.

Biju didn't bother to explain how impossible it would have been on his part to stretch out Haggard with his own lathi in the company of the wolfish British cops and in the full glare of the unimaginably non-violent and enthusiastic crowd: Had it been on the banks or beds of Mahanadi or Kathajodi or any other lonely or less crowded spot at Cuttack city or elsewhere in Orissa or even in any identical locale anywhere in India, the goof would have coughed blood and vomited half-digested food by the retaliation of Biju — Biju explained silently within, not to his enraged and disappointed father. But I'll surely flatten Haggard in particular and stretch out all British in general, Biju swore vengefully but silently. A right father knows a right son. LNP smiled within as if he perceived the imperceptible vow uttered by the junior here; his face irradiated with an ordinarily invisible glow that Biju could study with happiness, and he called his wife Ashalata Ray to dress and stitch up the wounds properly and nurse the kid adequately.

— And do you know ? — inquired the Indonesian narrator absurdly, and went on without awaiting any response — within a month in Barabati stadium the cops vs collegiates were wrestling for the title. Biju was reddened and gladdened to see Haggard on the other side; the sense of retribution rode roughsod in his bleeding heart, and perhaps for the first time Biju was wicked and sordid bit by bit. The match began to the whistle of the referee and Biju

danced in joy at heart that the chance to stretch out Haggard began. A skilful and talented hockeystar that he was, there was absolutely no difficulty for him to strike at the ankle of Haggard with the allowed alibi of wresting the ball. And the striking at Haggard's ankles and feet were neat and immaculate. None else, not even Haggard, much less the referee, knew that the wild bull of Biju was striking the ball rather weakly and aimlessly but the ankles and toes of Haggard wickedly and accurately. Sportive — born, brought up and through the entire eighty-one-year life — Biju was never bestial or vengeful like that, but he couldn't help being what he was that day because both father ar ,on were uncompromisingly alien to atrocities on the innocent and children, more just for fun. Cruelty and hard-heartedness, father and son agreed and acceded to, had its limits and constraints like everything else and when it overran the boundary it needed to be bounded by equal bestial behaviour, not by the message of the venerable Muhammad or the heart-rending manner of forgiveness sounded by Christ atop the cross. The *agent provocateur* Haggard realised the venom and vengeance of the *enfante terrible* back at home when his feet, toes, ankles etc. were seen to be profusely bleeding and immensely aching and raking. Biju rightly and mightily proved that Indian children aren't *al'sabandon.*

A' la bonne heure ! shouted the Indonesian speaker instinctively and exhaustively.

An old man listening to the legend intensely and emotionally commented—Self-honour and self-pride are two-sides of the same coin. Both father and son never gave up to self-pity and always indulged in immense self-pride. What the father may have done is unknown to us, but there's ample evidence in the Haggard incident that the son was immensely indulgent in self-pride. And self-pride, he added with subtle nuance of a superior philosophy, is the distinguishing ingredient of man vis-a-vis other forms of life.

— And that's there — impleaded a middle- aged, well-to-do farmer— with every man who is truly a successor or scion of the ancient Kalingan empire. The sons of Kalinga, I can say without a speck of doubt, were notable navigators, and memorable mariners who sailed the turbulent and pirate-infested seas from Australia to Africa, from Arabia to Antarctica without ever regarding that the tempestuous and tumultuous seas and bays, straits and tides may toss their 'Boitas', topple their wares and devour them every now and then. What a great feat, what a great pride ! Before Marcopolo or Meghasthenes thought of travel or tour, before Columbus or Vasco da gama ventured to the high seas to explore the trade channels and sea routes, the Kalingan '*sadhabas*' and sailors made it their hobby and job to set sail on the highly turbulent Indian ocean. Fie on him ! who claims to be a son of the great, ancient Kalingan society but sits on self-pride like a hatching hen on her egg ! The Kalingan kings and emperors — he added nostalgically — demanded to be respected like the legendary Purus and Kalingan kings and monarchs didn't nurse and pester their wounded sons, they like LNP, shot back if they paid back the adversary in his own coin and to the last pie. Kalingan fathers and mothers behaved like Corialanus' mother, like Shivaji's mother to turn up their sons the sturdy, successful scorers.

And the tall pilot, I can assure you, — shouted someone from behind— is Corialanus of sorts. Venture and invincibility are his hallmarks like those of the legendary Roman general.

The present Kaling — another sighed — is bleeding and bruised, battered and blackened and most important of it all is that it lacks the enviable self-pride that LNP showed so sincerely, so suffusely yet so privately.

O Kaling, O ! When do come your days back ?

Within minutes, the Dutch were seized of the nerve-raking incident. There was sound and sirens, shouts and screams, whistles

and whimpers, commands and orders in the Dutch army posts. Rows of soldiers were made to march and stand attention awaiting orders for the next moves; armoured and patrol vehicles moved helter and skelter kicking dust and releasing smokes and flutter; commanders and captains, sailors and airmen were commanded to red alert. And every man and every jawan, every officer and every captain looked at the sky from the corner of his eye. The vehicles and tanks, the aircrafts and guns, the armoury and the balloons, as it were, looked at trailing blaze of grey-white, thick smoke piercing Indonesian sky. The hardy and sturdy, the devoted and disciplined, the meticulous and manoeuvring, the vigilant and vivacious Dutch officers of the three wings as assembled in the shortest possible time and tirade were aghast and agape that a bloody Indian pilot, a hatable, hawkish, heathen pilot could dent in the mightily maintained Dutch garrison, snatch a couple of Indonesian revolutionary leaders and fly above their heads with pride and *pooh, pooh* ....Shame on us, shame — they screamed and squeaked and clattered their teeth and cringed their fist in rage and revenge. They were trampling the ground underfoot briskly and bestially and kicking dust columns that looked like listless whirlwind. The booting-down, bleating and braying by the Dutch post was frightening and ferocious. Indonesian and foreign civilians outside the cantonment apprehended that there's a mutiny and commotion of the great sort. Late-leaving birds and early-leaving herds were frightened and ran about in fear and excitement. People in general who generally leave bed by then apprehended something ominous and untoward.

Within moments of the commotion, the Dutch commander-in-chief having coordinated and organised the three wings with conspicuous Dutch speed and perfection, ordered the garrison commander to ask the pilot to down the Dakota and surrender or face dire consequences. The G C carried out the

order immediately and signalled the message over wire — You bloody Indian pilot, beware of the trap you're in. Never dare to unentwine yourself from this foolhardy Dutch snare and surrender or face death for no price.

—Nice morning to my best Dutch friends. Dutch valour and marksmanship is unparalleled in the world. I'm sure I've been in death's very bosom and you know for certain that's what exactly a pilot dreams — Biju replied over wire with sweetened voice but implicit censure.

– Be down or I shoot — thundered the G C in hoarse and harsh voice.

— I'm flying at my pleasure and am about out of your border; beware, never triffle defence matter like a toad in a gutter — he sounded back unperturbed and not at all afraid.

— You idiot of a bloody pilot, don't chuckle rubbish in mid-air. Down or I fire.

— Beware you fool, you can down me in a minute if you fume and frown. I'm alone in Indonesian air and you are so many there down under. But mind it my friend, I'm here with Pandit Nehru's missive. If I don't fly back, not a single Dutch plane, defence or civilian, would ever fly over India. I bet the bloody Indians will down each Dutch plane without any excuse or explanation. I dare you to do what you shout and to accost the devil at your own peril — he thundered back nobly and dramatically.

And the message from ground flickered and died out. While still minding his business of flying the Dakota with immaculate skill and consumate speed, he awaited other pieces of signal or message and moments later realised that it's futile to expect further communication. Now it's total respite or Dutch fire. He waited with bated breath.

No, nothing of the sort happened. The Dutch C-I-C, a military genius with superb civilian introspection and experience,

didn't risk a full-fledged war with India or the wild threat of the daring pilot. After all they really never designed to decimate the Indonesian freedom-fighters.

CONTRAST THIS WITH ANOTHER CONTRIVED UP EVENT.

Scene One

Venue - New Delhi, the sprawling official residence of Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India.

Time- 1975, August 14, 9.37 P.M.
The IB Chief enters puzzled and hurried.

IBC : Good evening, Dhawan Sahib? What's Ma'am doing?
RKD : She is in her study, a bit indisposed and a little worried. You can't meet ma'am tonight.
IBC : I may disturb ma'am for a second.
RKD : No, you can't, I say. There's no instruction to allow visitors.
IBC : Please see, Sahib, unless you come forward, everything will be awkward.
RKD : OK, I'm trying.

RKD connected the telephone to Indira Gandhi in her study.

RKD : Ma'am, the IB Chief is disturbing you.
(*The IBC looks at RKD's face intently and expectantly.*)
Now, you can go. But don't take much time, ma'am is indisposed I say.
IBC : (*entering hurriedly and looking back at Dhawan triumphantly*) I know, I know.

Scene Two

Indira Gandhi is lazing and reading a book in a well-decorated, comfortable rocking chair. The telephone is kept on a bright red stool, while another small, dazzling mahogany stool stands before her. The IBC salutes her reverentially, cautiously and is on the brink of divulging something.

IG : *(without looking at him)* - What happened?

IBC : *(nervously)* - Ma'am there's a piece of disturbing report. It................ (*he stopped, perhaps not knowing how to put it?)*

IG : *(still looking at the book)* - Hum........

IBC stood speechless. After about three minutes.

IG : *(looks up)* - Oh, you didn't sit; take a seat and say. Why so ruffled?

IBC : *(in the process of seating in the chair before her, hurriedly)* - Ma'am our Dhaka Officer has sent a top secret, highly sensitive, risky, hundred per cent confidential report.........

(*IG looks at him affectionately but sternly which makes him fixed; he continued*), that a few topnotch generals of Bangladesh Army are bent upon eliminating Bangabandhu Mujibur Rehman and his family soon, (*he stopped*).

IG : *(without much fuss but with studied contraction of her muscles on the radiant face)* How's that fellow?

IBC : *(immediately)* A very trustworthy, competent cop ma'am

IG : *Hum..(she rocks slowly and puts the book on the stool)*

(After a few seconds)

IG : *(coolly)* How soon ?
(IBC, by now seated comfortably, looked agape and with bated breath)
What other source you've checked with. (*She gazed at the IBC sternly and in irritation*)

IBC : *(half rising)*. Ma'am, I got the news at 9.17 PM and rushed to you immediately. Since the driver was out of home, I drove myself and didn't took a minute more except for the traffic there.......

IG : *(angrily)* Shut up and get out?
IBC exited immediately with a more polite and submissive salutation. As the red-light went off and the green light glowed in, RKD stood attention expecting an instant telephonic message from the Madam.
Call in RAW Chief.

RKD : *Yeah*, Ma'am, (*he hung the telephone*).
As the IBC wanted to tell him something, he said no, and dialled RAW Chief's number. The IB Chief departed nimbly and nervously. A few minutes after enters the RAW Chief who smiles at RKD routinely and a bit nervously to which he responded with a 'namaste' and immediately showed him the door with a silent whisper — ma'am is waiting.

IG : *(to politely saluting RAW Chief)*, Take a seat please, What's matter abroad?

RAWC: Ma'am, we've bad news across Bangla border. A group of Officers headed by a top general is plotting to eliminate Bangabandhu and his entire family. (*while handing a piece of a paper to her)* Maybe tomorrow's their last. The President has no inkling of such gruesome plot nor does suspect anyone of the stinking lot.

IG : *(going through the paper pensively but quickly and while softly handing the piece back to him)* What next ?

RAWC : *(cautiously)* I've not yet worked on it fully. I just received the information and.......

IG : *(annoyed)* Stop being silly, what do we need to do?

RAWC : I suppose we can inform the President via our Dhaka embassy that he flee Dhaka to-night with all his family and a few trusted body-guards. Otherwise he may be advised to hide himself somewhere in Dhaka proper and we may move our men immediately to rescue him.

IG : *Hum.....(She sat steadfast and serious for several seconds and then),* anything else?

RAWC : Or we can tell him to mobilise the 333 Sonar Bangla Division around the palace and order arrest of the mutineers by day-break.

IG : Hum.....You can go.

With the green light reappearing and the RAWC hurrying out briskly, RKD awaited another call from the madam and he called the Air Chief Marshal at her instructions. The ACM reached and entered into the study, with ceremonial salute and permission from her to seat, he sat and looked at her.

IG : *(with slightly ruffled face)* You know it all, what can you do ?

ACM : *(all attention)* As ma'am desires.

IG : *(with a look of ruminating something she has thought of quickly and seriously)* I'll like that our airmen rush straight and lift Mujib and his children before dawn breaks on Dhaka horizon, do you understand ?

ACM : *Yeah,.* Ma'am, *(he said quickly, as if automatically)*

IG : *(with a sense of relief melting the hardness on her*

ruffled face) -Go now, please meet me by 8 AM.

ACM saluted and flung back, swiftly but in a routine manner; his heavy boots thudding the floor noisily after him.

Scene Three

Indian Air Force Headquarters in New Delhi.

Time 11.15 P.M. the same night. The ACM entered in his office chamber to the salute of the sentry and expectation and excitement by the personnel here and there.

ACM : *(pushing button of the calling bell, lighting a cigar)* Is it possible? Modern-times air operation demands rationalisation and judgement, not emotional dictates. *(to the airman who has entered in the meantime) VACM.*

Airman : Not here, Chief.

ACM : Get him immediately.

The airman exited with saluting. The steno and private secretaries swung into business with the belief that an imminent operation was in the offing. The Vice Air Chief Marshal came within minutes and got straight into the ACM's chamber.

ACM : We've serious business at hand. Ma'am desires that we airlift Bangabandhu and his family tonight at any cost.

VACM: *(with a calm face as if he expected such orders)* - *hum...*

ACM : We've to start moving. There's so much little time left, you know.

VACM : Will we call others for a conference and...

ACM : (*interrupting*) - Conference at the stroke of twelve. What do you mean?

VACM : I mean to work out the operation with those Wing Commanders, Squadron Leaders and Captains as will take part in the short- notice operation.

ACM : No, no, no, we've no time. *(paused for a few seconds)*, Just get Wing Commander Arora. I think the bloody dog has a jest for midnight operation at short notice. Don't you remember what he did then ?

VACM : I remember. He's a captain and just carried out your orders which resulted from hair-splitting discussion for days and immaculate planning for hours.

ACM : *Yaar*, you forget he struck so hard, so accurately that the Pakistanis wept not for the devastation but for the bewilderment it caused. Don't you agree that that single operation gave us tremendous edge to smash them quickly.

VACM : I remember. You forget that there's state of hostilities between us and that operation was a marvellous piece in our entire gameplan. It's strategic, not romantic, and we were for tactical edge, not a thrilling and filmy action.

The clock struck one somewhere near.

ACM : Good God, we're done.

VACM : That looks so, (*he pushed the button of the bell.*).

The messenger that ran to get Wing Commander BS Arora took about half an hour as he was not at home, nor in the Air Headquarters Officers' Mess. He was for a treat by an industrial-house friend of his. He drove straight from Ashoka Hotel in the capital and entered in without fuss.

ACM : It's not nice you're not at home at this hour.

Arora : (*unfazed*). At this hour my wife doesn't look for me, Chief.

ACM : Shut up, you dog, it's no time for revelry and devilry.

Arora : Sorry Chief, extremely sorry.

VACM : We've to plan an immediate action to airlift Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and all his kith and kin. You know his life's in danger.

Arora : Is it so soon?

VACM : (*weakly*) *Yeah.*

Arora : Then we can move right now?

ACM : How?

Arora : We can detail Squadron Leader Palei, Group Captain Pillai and Captains Randhawa, Robins, and Rout with two helicopters closely guarded by half a dozen Mirages, I feel.

ACM - Palei ?

Arora - Based at Kaleikunda, Pillai at Jodhpur and Rout at Madras.

ACM : And the Captains?

Arora : They're here, some in Delhi and others at Jammu.

VACM : No, Arora, that's not being sensible.

ACM : Yet you work out. I'm a bit tired and sleepy. Report me by seven or so how nicely my boys did the job.

VACM : *Yeah*, Chief.

All of them rose. The ACM left by 1.45 AM. VACM, Arora and a few other captains and squadron leaders as were called in attended the meeting and there's hot and serious discussion. At 3.30 AM,

VACM : Arora, I can presently go. Look to it that Operation Night Angel comes off successful and quickly.

Arora : *Yeah.* (VACM left the chamber)

All through the night the Operation Night Angel was discussed threadbare and in exhaustive details. Messages were

transmitted to different airbases and positions. IAF helicopters dashed through the Delhi night sky like lightnings in a rainless sky. Captains and flight lieutenants, squadron leaders and others were brought in and sent out in two's and three's. BS Arora, sleepy and heavy with his brisk and boisterous drinks at Ashoka Hotel occupied the seat at the centre but did lose control of the situation and the confabulations owing to sheer exhaustion. The other members there were in a flurry of activity. Most of them physically lifted from their beds, bedrooms or prominent discotheques of the city took time to seize the matter. By the time they were ready and steady, there's no need that they would continue there. By the break of day when birds and buses cried out in their usual tone that the night had fled, BS Arora said, "*OK we can talk later*".

And we all know what happened to Bangabandhu and his family.

So, this is Bijoyanand Patnaik, Biju Patnaik for short and for all. In the Indonesian action he was alone, all alone. Dr Harekrushna Mahatab, the veteran freedom fighter and two-time Chief Minister of Orissa, who groomed and geared Biju to Orissa politics, but fell out with him later and bitterly, and who is immensely immaculate in the use of language and ideas, said — Bijoy is used to be called a dare devil. He was known for his dash and this was recognised even by Jawaharlalji. Establishment of a major port and construction of the Express Highway at the cost of the state government are the lasting monuments of Bijoy's dare in administration.

It may be noted that the veteran litterateur that Dr. Mahatab was, he called Bijoyanand Patnaik - Bijoy for short, not Biju as others and Biju himself used to call him. Bijoy is equivalent to victory in English. Dr. Mahatab called him Bijoy as much affectionately as with a literary significant tag. Having seen Bijoyanand Patnaik coming out successful in a host of dangerous

and dare-devil situations, he did not consider it wise to call Bijoyanand as Biju for short in place of the suggestive and virtuous nick-name of Bijoy.

And the dare-devilry of Biju is really thrilling and legendary.

Just a few years to Indian Independence, Biju was assigned the job to fly a proud, British lieutenant connel to Quetta, now in Pakistan. The British as a rule, and the faddist and proudish particularly, hated native Indians more for the heck of it than for any apparent reason. This proud-flesh lieutenant connel reached Delhi airport in time and was sure of a special, exclusive plane for him. Now that he saw the plane in the hangar, he looked for the pilot who would fly him. The army men attending him showed him Biju, the young Indian pilot in natty uniform and graceful gait, traversing the distance with dignified strides. The corps showing the pilot to the connel did not fail to praise the former in glowing terms. But the lieutenant connel had no ears for the lyrics of praise for the pilot. He was stirred to his spinal cord and shouted — What, this bloody Indian pilot for me.

The attending corps could not protest the uncharitable remark nor could they explain that there are Indian pilots who are far superior to any American or European pilots. The proud, fussy, ostentatious connel may have cancelled his tour to Quetta on the sole ground that a bloody Indian pilot was alloted to fly his plane. But urgency of work stopped him from taking recourse to that despicable course.

The tall, sparkling pilot, punctual to the hilt and proud to the heel, heard what the connel said. Self-esteemed and eruditely egotistical, the efflorescing pilot was extremely hurt by the ribald and rank comment on the entire Indian race. His boisterous and brisk boots stopped for a moment. He looked up and was confirmed that it was the connel that uttered this derogatory rubbish. From his quivering physique and angry, red face even a

fool would doubt that what he said said just casually. No, he was sincere with his disdainful remark. He hated the Indians from the depth of his navel, more so because they were agitating for the past few years to shake off the British yoke. He ejected the reproachful remark so indignantly that he was himself outraged by its sheer, suffocating sensation. Brilliant for his brain, Biju thought for a while — What would he do ? Should he run towards the connel, pull him by the collar, slap him on the face, and be back at home ? Should he run to the connel, stand in front of him like a colossus, charge him, and force an instant and unqualified apology from his reticent, red lips?

No, no — he nodded his head vigorously by the abrupt appearance of the alternative option. He proceeded softly, saluted the connel routinely and indignantly and got into the plane followed by the only passenger, the British connel. The plane took off, the corps aground wished the connel good journey, and he waved them back happily and regally. Scores of miles off Delhi in the thick of thin mid-air, the 'bloody' Indian pilot entrusted the engine to the co-pilot with tit-bits of essential information and told him that he was retiring due to uneasiness. No problem—whispered the co-pilot joyfully. Biju turned around to the well-furnished seat where the connel was now dozing, now easing, now boozing in wine and now browsing through the pages of a fashionable American fashion magazine where Hollywood stars were staring lasciviously at one another. Biju was all fire and fury, all tar and torrid.

Hullo, Mr. Patnaik, how do you do ? — he greeted, though with a sense of uneasiness and nervousness caused by the visibly shivering physique of Biju

Like devil from hell, extremely fine do I do — he quipped with quivering lips and pointing his right hand to the chest of the connel with a pistol-like object wrapped in his fist.

Ow, woo, ooup... the connel shuddered and screamed, but his words and shouts could not come out of his throat.

And hands up — shouted Biju at the top of his voice, shivering in anger and vengeful hatred like a wounded tiger.

Oww, oh, woup......the connel could reply this much, trembling in trepidations and overwhelmed wholesale by the unthinkable turn of events aboard.

Hands up, I say — growled Biju more terribly.

The connel raised up his hands at once and impulsively. Perhaps the British are the best at the operation and practice of the survival instinct.

Now tell me, who's bloody — the Indian pilot or the British connel ?

You see, Mr. Patnaik, you're crossing all limits of decency and insubordination — the connel stammered — by treating a British army officer of superior rank with rank humiliation — he added. I'm sure you'll regret this sooner than later.

Shut up, you son of a bitch — he commanded — apologise immediately.

The connel hung his head in utter distress and shame. He figured out within him that he just couldn't do anything then and there, and the only sensible option available to him was to tender apology without reservation and with resignation. None knows what this bloody hound is after. Can I think that he buries the hatchet after my apology and ends the matter there ? Perhaps not. The bloody blood- hound he looks, he may just shoot me out in this mid - air over the Indian soil and thousands of miles from my motherland, the great Great Britain where the sun has forgotten to sleep for the past half century. Yet I can try to save my paternal soul from the claws of this bloody cat by expressing a simulated apology.If the idiotic fool accepts it as the pound of flesh for his rubbish ego and lets me go, I shall certainly shoot him at Quetta

when the plane is aground; sure, sure, sure,.......he shook himself in sheer excitement, oblivious of the present predicament.

So I shoot — sounded Biju terribly and loudly.

No, no, I beg your pardon that I hurt your sentiments by my irresponsible utterance for which there's absolutely no provocation, no occasion. He looked up pitiably like a pet pussy cat looking at his angry but affectionate master.

Ok — Biju returned to the pilot's chamber, took charge of the engine, and flew his mind into the wildest of imaginations. What next, bloody Biju — he mused to himself — after your arrival at Quetta be sure that the bloody British officers and men jump on you like a pack of wolves and tear your tendons and tibia like shreds of a detonated bomb. Oh, let's see, — he considered next moment — only because that the present pleasant air would be terrible wind in the future, should one stop inhaling ?

The connel was aghast, upright and agitated at what happened just now. What should he do ? — he questioned to himself silently. Should he shoot the pilot, blow up the plane and consign himself to the ensuing hot, red flames ? That would be great, not exactly cavalier, but bravelier — he thought to himself. But then the entire episode would be shrouded; that a British army officer blew up his own plane to save the honour of the British nation and the Empire would be buried in oblivion; none would ever air a word of praise for me, but fabricated and false stories would be festered and flown about the heroic and brave acts of the pilot who possibly did his utmost manoeuvring to save the connel and his plane though he could have parachuted and saved his own life in a selfish, sinister attempt. And given his honest, handsome physique, his graceful, dignified gait; his courageous, conspicuous demeanour, and his zeal for his job, he could be just praised and praised even beyond the boundaries of Mars and Jupiter. Next, should I order for his arrest on reaching Quetta? It

may create a flutter and a fire. The British officers and men with their nose-tips always adscript in books and rules may ask a thousand and one question, overtly politely but covertly aggressively. Bloody Britons, why so much fuss about rules and laws ? Can you not once for hell dispense with your fancy and fondness for rules and regulations even when a connel asks that a brat of an Indian pilot be arrested ? No, the bloody fools will sing the same note — FIR, investigation, complaint, witness, PR bond and what hell have you. And you know bloody British law is so bad that truth and honesty put plainly and impatiently just evaporates your case. Who the hell should always carry an attorney's brief case so that you put your facts and figures, complaints and contentions in the right parameters of the law to get the offender punished. Now that I don't have time and that I have to meet with Vicerory immediately on return, it's not at all possible that I can get him apprehended and keep him behind the bar. No, he can only be dealt with when I' m back in Delhi.

At Quetta nothing untoward happened. Biju had an eye on the face of the connel and could study without mistake that the fellow did mellow, at least, for the time he's at Quetta. On return journey to Delhi, he anticipated something untoward and insulting. He geared up his guns to encounter the plausible situation and immediately after landing in Delhi he gave such a superb slip that the connel and his men, the Delhi police and the airfield personnel all shouted and did run after Biju, but in vain.

The connel swallowed the bitter pill of ignominy and insult which he could never think of even in his worst nightmare.

Bijoyananda Patnaik, Biju Patnaik for short, was born on March 5, 1916 at Ananda Nivas, Tulasipur, Cuttack to Laxminarayan Patnaik and Ashalata Ray who hailed from Chittagong, now in Bangladesh. Laxminarayan did his BA and was interested in the Indian Civil Service which he could not join.

He joined as a clerk in the civil court at Sambalpur in Orissa and then became a munsif and was transferred to Cuttack where he set up his famous Ananda Nivas home. He retired as a sub judge. Biju is the second of Laxminarayan's three sons, the other two being Sradhananda and Joyananda, George and Siju for short. George Patnaik was a dental surgeon and sports-lover. He was the Vice President of Orissa Olympic Association for many years and is pretty well-known to the sports persons of Orissa. He predeceased Biju in 1990. Joyananda joined the Indian Air Force, but died young due to cancer. Mukti Devi, the only sister of Biju did her MA and was married into a famous Mohapatra family.

Biju was a brave boy from the very beginning. While young, he was afflicted by appendicitis. The attending physician as well as others could not imagine that he could bear the pain of undergoing a surgical operation. The acute appendicitis gave him a lot of pain, but he bore it bravely. The attending physicians patted him and remarked that he was a really brave boy. During those days even Cuttack, the capital of Orissa, had not any medical facility worth the name. The disease of Biju assumed serious proportions. So parents and other well-wishers who had a special liking for this ambitious, adventurous and audacious chap were worried but heaved a sigh of relief when the crisis was blown over, when the boil was blown off.

Biju studied in Ravenshaw Collegiate School, a premier and prestigious high school of the state, which boasts of Subhas Chandra Bose as one of its many illustrious alumni. In his school days he was prominent for his love for games, sports and adventure. He was a good footballer and hockey player. At least in the sports arena, he was a good organiser. It was almost customary that the school team with Biju as a player always won championships and trophies. And it is interesting that he always played as a scorer, a forward; scarcely on the defence. Ravenshaw

Collegiate School football team won the inter-school championship for three years during the years when Biju was a key player of the team.

More than for his talents as a player, he is memorable for his antics and histrionics as a player. In the RC School, his friend, Bhubananda Patnaik, was the football team captain. The team won the championship. In a glittering ceremony, the chief guest of the occasion was to give away the trophy to Bhubananda. Students and spectators applauded loudly and cheerfully when the prize was announced and when the chief guest held aloft the bright, glittering trophy. In the beginning Biju joined his friends and schoolmates in shouting *hip, hip hurrah* etc., but later on he sat silent by being gripped by a sense of envy and injustice. The chief guest, all smiles, was about to hand over the cup to a beaming Bhubananda who was stretching his polite palms to receive the same. At this juncture, an unexpected incident took place — Biju ran straight to the podium, pushed Bhubananda aside and snatched the cup from the graceful palm of the chief guest. With the cup in one hand and still panting, he looked at Bhubananda lying down on the dais and muttered quite distinctly — 'Shala' (*bloody*), I' ll score goals and you'll lift the cup from the guest to the great applause of the audience. It is to be noted that Bhubananda was there to accept the cup as captain of the team and was always all praise for Biju, the top scorer of the team.

From Ravenshaw Collegiate School, he went to Ravenshaw College at Cuttack, the oldest and most respected college in Orissa, to get himself admitted to the intermediate science course. There he also continued his Bachelor of Science course till 1934 when he left the college without passing the B.Sc. final examination as he was appointed a pilot in the Royal Air Force of the British Empire. In Ravenshaw College, he was the college athletic champion for three years. And his Ravenshavian days are

notable and nostalgic for the intervening Cuttack-Peshawar cycling. During the nineteen thirties bicycles were enviable luxuries of most middle-class households. Adventurous and acrobatic that Biju is, it is natural he desired to do the most of his pet bike. He pedalled his bike from Bhanjanagar to Cuttack, a distance of about 160 Kilometers, in his schooldays. When at Cuttack, capital of the then Orissa, it was natural yearn by him to pedal out of Cuttack to some distant place. And what about Peshawar, the northwestern tip of Bharata, the city that boasts of the legend of Purus and Alexander, and the city that was the capital of Kaniska, the great Hun monarch. Oh, it would be nice — Biju must have thought to himself. But how to cycle that long distance alone ? Not that he was afraid of moving alone, but that he yened fun and mirth while cycling over the vast earth of mother India. Besides, parents would not allow him to go on such a long, solitary cycling; only with friends around they would concede to the intriguing urge of the indomitable yearling called Biju. So he persuaded and pampered friends, Bhramarabar Sahu and Amar Ray, made them agree to this adventurous freak, and set out on the odyssey from Orissa to Peshawar, a distance of 4000 Kms plus. Biju , Amar and Bhramar have set a record for the Oriya youths and college students and even for the youths of India in that the hurdles and handicaps in cycling such a long distance from a south-east city to a north-west city were unsurmountable during the thirties when there were rarely crowds or clubs to cheer and garland the young Ullyses from Orissa who had paltry sums of money, meagre food materials and little other aids and accessories with them. They were uninitiated to the language, lifestyle, customs and ways to the Indian huts, hamlets, shacks and cities they passed through. The marathon cycling by the youthful trio possible mainly due to their manly dream, aspiration and ambition is historic and sets an excellent example to adventurous and path- breaking treks by the present youths.

And Biju remained a boasting Ravenshavian all through. It must be put on record that ninety per cent of the illustrious sons of twentieth century Orissa who had college education are alumni of this prestigious institution. Like many other contemporary, conspicuous, intellectual seats of prestige and fame, Ravenshaw College has seen steady decline in all spheres of activity. In his second term as Chief Minister between 1990 and 1995, he wanted to restore some of the lost glories of this great college. To most people renovation and improvement of old and prestigious institutions means provision of funds by the government. When in the meeting convened to discuss about Ravenshaw College the same thing was raised and the participants clamoured for funds for the college, he sighed and said — I can provide funds, but where can I get Artaballabh Mohanty and Dr. Balabhadra Prasada? It's stark turn-around by a man who was more swayed by the lopsided development economics that funds and resources alone accelerated progress and prosperity of a region or a nation. Perhaps the beleagured Chief Minister that he was by that time he realised belatedly his schooldays poem — Not gold, but only men can make a people rich and strong. Yes, that's so. When Ravenshaw College ascended to commanding heights as the alma mater of men proficient and distinguished in as varied fields as politics and physics, poetry and philosophy, social service and saintly sacrifice, it did not brag of its buildings and structures, play-grounds and pathways, but did of its hostels and laboratories, classrooms and libraries, commonrooms and seminaries. The incomparable chemist that Dr. Balabhadra Prasad was, the enviable critic, researcher, orientalist and curator that Dr Artaballabh Mohanty was, the internationally acclaimed botanist that Dr Pranakrushna Parija was, they were the professors and people that guided and inspired their pupils with such paternal care and control that the latter spread out in their fields of interest

and involvement like oil on water, too fast and too sure.

Ravenshaw College matured and perpetuated the Biju that was born in Ravenshaw Collegiate School. In the school, he was a player and scorer; here he was bloomed into an adventurer and trekker. What is not very clear or evident is that the transformation was swift and total. In school he was a participant and teammate, here he was an organiser and leader. Of course, people who knew him did not fail to discover the great talent and tapestry he had to organise and lead. Personally honest, the eminent professor of Oriya and equally powerful Oriya playwright, Pranabandhu Kar, Biju's collegemate said — I have always remembered him (Biju Patnaik) as leader of our group, not as a follower.

During Biju's days a bicycle was a handsome piece of luxury and aristocracy , what to speak of a plane or helicopter? But this our leader does not settle for less, for worse. He always dreams of touching and pocketing the best, the most magnificent. In his schooldays, a helicopter touched the ground at Cuttack with his mount, a dignitary of the British Empire. It's naturally talk of the town, the '*Cuttackias*' literally literalising the phrase to all miracles and all rumours. Several men , women and children gathered at a distance to have a close look of the metallic bird. The literati and the glitterati encircling the metallic kingfisher plunged themselves in whispers and humour. Simmering in the Cuttack sun, the helicopter blinded the onlookers standing hundreds of yards off. They compared it with the flying horse and the 'Puspakayana' , or even the 'Manapawana'. The bald, Brahmin boy of a nearby '*Tola*' averred — the princes of yore mounted flying horses like this, criss- crossed the sky in minutes, hovered over palaces and parishes, alighted atop princess' parlour or palace - tops, sang lyrics and love poems to the willing and willy-nilly ears of the princess, had a lot of fun, frolicking and feast of love

within the span of one night, and departed from the place with the princess arm in arm when crows cawed or roosts called that the day is dawned. The sentries and the kings' sons would be screaming and aiming at the decamping prince who would be waving back at his '*shalas*' (wife's brothers) with broad-chinned giggling and be flying on the flying- horse like this.

The bulky, businessman's son thrusted himself from behind and betted---*Shala, tujhe kuchh vi malum nahin*, (bloody, you know nothing), I say this is the puspakayana in which the decamerous 'Ravana' abducted mother Sita from 'Panchavati' to his Lanka capital. Fewer but powerful people people the puspakayana now as then.

An elderly, educated man fixing his gaze on the helicopter like an avid astronomer gazing on the bright, fixed polestar, but overhearing the boys, for a feast of fun, looked back and asserted ---It's a solo-carrier. Only one man can be seated in this miraculous carrier . *Narada*, the celibacy and sage , who tours the fourteen worlds daily and deliberately flies himself in such an aircraft , and this is his 'manayana'. What's a manayana ? A manayana flies with the speed of the mind and by the promptings of the mind. Looking at the appreciating eyes and gaped mouths of the boys, he added-—Narada was blessed with the manayana and none, not even Vishnu, could fabricate or manufacture another manayana; but the British have crossed all limits of decency and have manufactured manayanas aplenty in their sordid soil even for lesser men.

A highschool student bracing up embarrassed the elderly man by saying---Not the British, I swear; it's the Americans who conceived , contrived and designed aircrafts for the human race and for the entire world.

The elderly man manured the embarrassment to his memory to shout angrily—What do you know, you fritter of a cabbage ? The Britons people the America and ruled it for

centuries. Evén though America is now free from the British yoke, it's not free from the British blood.

Hey, there's Biju—the boy shouted and saved himself from the embarrassment caused by the elderly man's reprimand. And Biju, the young, tall boy brimming with enthusiasm and extasy is surging ahead to be as near the helicopter as possible. The only and one desire that possesses him right now is to touch the helicopter. O marvellous, magnificent piece of aircraft—he wondered and wondered while moving and meandering ahead. How slick, sizzling and superb!—he exclaimed repeatedly and rapturously. How fortunate and fabulous he is that flies this aircraft ! —he lavished praises on that unseen category of American, European pilots and captains. And he moves and moves and moves with wonder and amazement and hysteria and sighs seizing and strangulating his cognition and imagination. And lo, he's right near the sparkling, sunny, sturdy wing of the helicopter and stretches his handsome, honest, right palm to touch it, as if in a trance. He's unaware of the environment, of the gathering, of the uniformed police in scores cordoning the helicopter off the covetous crowd, and of the warning and admonition hurled at him by the people and the police. The white, silver, shiny metallic bird of a helicopter draws, drags and drives him towards it like the oozing udder of an affectionate mother drags a breast-feeding baby or like *Bhagawan* draws the disciplined, devoted *Bhakta* or as the Bay of Bengal draws Kathajodi and Mahanadi to her bubbling bosom and core. The silver, white, big bird, and Biju, to Biju there's nothing more. He's driven, drawn and dragged irresistibly and instinctively. He's drawn and driven towards the helicopter like Visvakabi Rabindra Nath Tagore was drawn towards the topless, snow peaks of Kanchenjunga or like the young barrister, Dayananda Mohapatra is drawn and dragged by the stately domes of the Supreme Court of India. Biju is drawn towards the helicopter

and there's a terrible trepidation down his spine resulting in a revulsion that drives, darts and shoots all men and women, all constable and officers off the helicopter. He's not able to hear the yell and yelp of Mr. Hargreaves, the superintendent of police, forbidding him to go near it. He places his swift, supple, pink palm on the wing when Hargreave's hueless lathi strikes heartless on his young , hairy head. As if Newton's apple falling off the tree was snatched mid-air by Kepler, his smooth, sincere palm fell off the helicopter and he fell on the ground with a big bruise on the temple and with streaks of blood cascading off above the forehead. He doesn't know what happened thereafter, but he swore to himself that he must be a pilot and must fly aircrafts himself as many as the kids of Cuttack fly kites in the Cuttack winter.

But how to become a pilot ? To become a pilot one needs to invest a lot of money in training and licence fee etc. The retired father with household obligations and burdens could scarcely afford for this young one's dream or pleasure. But then another global war of portending proportions was looming large on the European horizon and, unmistakably, the British Empire was the target of aggrieved Italy and Germany. In the war - preparedness, Hitler of Germany was strengthening, expanding and updating his airforce. Apprehensive of Germany's superior air power and superior air-strike capabilities, the British embarked upon improving and expanding their air power. Recruitment of more pilots, including and mainly Indian, was part of the strategy, and luck licked Biju's forehead when he jumped to the pilot recruitment programme of the British and saw himself as one. The Hargreaves lathi on his head, one could be amply sure, prompted the headstrong boy to swear not only to be a pilot but also to own aircrafts of his own.

He set up his own company of airlines and christened it Kaling Airlines.

His fascination and fancy for aeroplanes and helicopters

accelerated his avian acumen and expertise promisingly and promiscuously.

Though he was a *phiringee*-basher like all reputed revolutionaries and popular freedom-fighters of the day, he was not a back-stabber or saboteur. A disciplined and dedicated worker, he carried out his errands and operations of airlifting stranded and suffering British families in Malaya, Singapore and Burma in the wake of Japanese aggression on these parts of the British Empire during World War II with such dexterity and magnificence that he earned enormous kudos from colleague pilots, British army officers and British public in general. His daring in flights and air operations was notably exemplified when he rushed the first batch of soldiers to Srinagar Airport in the face of terrible risk in 1947 when the Pakistani forces and tribals from the north-western Kashmir aided, abetted and instigated by the Pakistani army, were on the rampage in the Kashmir valley and were on the doors of Srinagar. The Indian Army and Air Force were awfully handicapped because of the sudden but secret operation by their Pakistani counterparts. The position was aggravated by lack of accurate and up-to-date information about the invaders' progress and strategy and by the disruption of all vital communication links with the valley. The Indian army officers were apprehensive of heavy casualties and demoralising losses in the abrupt and unthought rushing out of forces. The Air wing had its constraints in detailing aircrafts and deploying pilots. Biju, the young pilot of young India, habitually unused to late or hindrance, just dashed in and flew the first contingent of troops to the valley by airdropping them in Srinagar. IAF fighter planes and helicopters followed suit and massed troops in the valley resulting in heavy rebuff to the Pakistani forces and rampaging tribal hordes.

And the pilot lived with him, within him, without him till the end. At least he was a pilot in heart and soul even when he

was in the thick of politics and was immersed in the flood of files, telephonic conversations, visiting places and meeting guests. That's really amazing when we remember that many pilots and captains consciously or carelessly forget the aircraft when they retire, excepting, of course, the times and occasions when they drizzle their thrilling romance of flights and operations into enemy bases or in awfully bad weather to enthused listeners. In 1962 when he was the chief minister of Orissa the state was experiencing one of the worst floods of history. The entire coastal belt comprising the then Puri, Cuttack and Balasore districts along with midland pockets in Dhenkanal and Keonjhar districts was gripped by high floods. Another drop of water, you can guess, the marooned homes, hamlets, people and cattle will be swept clean to the Bay of Bengal within a blinker. The swollen rivers like Mahanadi, Kathajodi, Brahmani, Budhabalanga and Subernarekha looked very much like bloated milky-ways. Water, water, everywhere-muddy, mad, gaggling, giggling, tumultuous, swift-running, roaring, tearing, shearing water as far as eyes can see. Whirlpools and cesspools, deafeaning roars or sneaking silence hither and thither. The all pervasive waterfront wiped out the wafer thin distinction between sea and river. The sun shone bright but heavy clouds like pregnant women loomed large on cast and west, on north and south. The marooned and misery-stricken masses were less afraid of the massive water below than of that lurking in the big womb of the fleshy, big clouds. Tall trees and high grounds here and there stood their ground and sheltered men, women and children---rich and poor, high and low. Cattle and reptiles, snakes and jackals also huddled in these patches and pockets alongside and close to humans. And wonder of wonders ! Goats and wolves, snakes and men co-existed in the same butt or tree as if they were close and ageless friends.

Mahanadi delta is almost protected from recurring flood

ravages by the massive earth dam at Hirakuda, eight kilometers upstream west of Sambalpur. The catchment area of the river system situated in eastern Madhya Pradesh flushes rain water during rainy season, causing floods. During the days in 1962 we are talking of, the catchment area of Mahanadi was experiencing incessant rains and the Hirakuda reservoir was rising every minute alarmingly. The dam officials were nervous and frigid with fear that further rains upstream and further ingress to the reservoir would spell dooms-day for the dam and the vast delta downstream. There were urgent appeals from them to the Irrigation and Power Department in the state secretariat at Bhubaneswar to permit them to open more and more sluice gates and release more and more flood-water. In Biju's regime, who else can take such an important decision ? Officers and engineers flocked to him and flooded him with the disastrous messages and communications received from the Dam site. Biju was also flooded with appeals and information about the nerve-raking, brain-blowing inundation downstream. The bureaucrats who were also aware of the plight and provocative posture of flood-ravaged people finally tendered their well-considered opinion that more water from the reservoir be released to save the dam from bursting and blowing apart. Between the devil of dam collapse and deep sea of downstream flood, they considered it wise to opt for the latter. The bureaucratic experience has taught them to save the oil pot in preference to the baby's head,to yield to and assuage the known devil than to await and accost the uncertain, unknown devil.

Biju is cavalier in fashion and profession, in light reading and serious discussion. In the instant case, he really encountered an unsurmountable dilemma. He could see in his mind's eye the suffering and misery, the agony and outcry of millions of people and livestock of coastal Orissa; he could also conceive of the imminent, plausible danger of Hirakuda dam exploding with

retention of more water beyond its capacity. He could not afford either. The dam is a multi-crore multipurpose project, a monument of modern Orissa, saving thousands of lives and crores of rupees worth of crops and other property from the annual, recurring flood visitation in coastal Orissa. Once blown apart, the dam water would cause untold deluge. Alternatively, the inundated pockets would receive more devastating deluge if further release from the dam is allowed. The coastal belt, Biju imagined and rightly, is a over-brimming cup; any further addition will sink the entire region to the nether. Perhaps for the first time Biju is thinking and the whole congregation of bureaucrats and people's representatives are watching him silently and impatiently. They have no suggestion to offer and they know any silly, supercilious suggestion would only increase his anger. The nervous and no-nonsense men around him are all to hear him, but abruptly he got up with no-nonsense, low-tone order — Wait till I come back.

And he left like a supersonic jet while the gathering dispersed and scurried helter and skelter. It is about his lunch hour and the power-hungry, publicity-hungry persons over there hungrily presumed that he left for his dishes in his old cavalier fashion despite this immediate-order-awaiting state affair. Biju drove straight to Bhubaneswar aerodrome, recently named after him, reached the hangar, parked off the state plane, and flew straight for the marooned areas. The entire stretch wedged between Calcutta-Madras National Highway and the Bay of Bengal looked like a wide, big disc filled to the brim with water. The submerged, distressed people raised a pathetic outcry below, thinking the plane was laden with relief succour. Sentimental even though he is not, he was moved by the plight and pity of the suffering souls below. Immediately he flew back, parked the state plane in the hangar, and drove straight to the secretariat. While the lurking sort of petty politicians and lower-ranking officers departed with the belief

that the CM would not be back within next two hours in the least with his lavish lunch and accompanying nap, the people's representatives and officers who were a bit sincere and were sighing about the imminent danger of dam collapse and more washouts downstream were loitering on the corridor, thanks to their lazy minds and lazy legs. They were aghast and agape when the tall CM appeared from the lift and pushed ahead towards his chamber without responding to the loiterers' greetings. Once inside the chamber, he dictated order more to the bureaucrats' horror — Tell the Superintending Engineer, Hirakuda Dam that he will not open any more sluice gates nor will discharge any more water from the reservoir as the downstream flood-affected pockets are experiencing the most precarious plight.

But there be more rains and the already overfilled reservoir would burst and crack if the CM stops further release — a senior bureaucrat said sheepishly and with terror writ large on his sweating temple.

Sir, the meteorological station at Bhubaneswar has forecast that there'll be heavy downpour on Mahanadi catchment areas in the next 72 hours and if the CM does not allow releasing water off the reservoir beforehand, the flash gush of rain water into it may simply breach the dam. There're dark, devilish clouds in the sky — added a high-ranking engineer, mustering all the strength at his command and being emboldened that an IAS officer has shown the way to suggest things to this tall C.M.

O, no, — he shouted — the bloody meteorology department knows nothing nor do you rogues. The condition of the affected people is too much even for a single drop of more water. I say there'll be no rains immediately. After slapping the order on the gaping officers, trembling engineers and stumbling politicians, he rose and left for lunch.

By a strange quirk of fate he was immaculately unmistaken.

There was no rain either downstream or upstream in the next 72 hours. The standing flood which hesitated so long to recede and run started receding faster, and the entire flood havoc diminished to a manageable level. The oracle of Delfi that the CM made that day may have come true by a strange coincidence of weather and floods conniving to help, not hinder, this tall pilot, this tall chief Minister.

While he left his favourite hunting grounds, Ravenshaw College, Cuttack in 1934 even while he was doing his B.Sc. to join the Royal Air Force as a pilot, he joined in the job in 1937 after completion of training and probation. He married to Gian in 1938. In 1940, he came in contact with the firebrand freedom-fighters of the day and was inspired by the mass movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Ballavabhai Patel etc. He was charmed by the miraculous power of the Mahatma, enthralled by the erudition and oratory of Pandit Nehru, and mesmerized by the manoeuvres of Subhash Chandra Bose. In spite of his admiration for and adoration of the troika he was spontaneously drawn to Aruna Asaf Ali, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Narendra Dev and Ram Manohar Lohia. As a pilot in the British employ, he could not take active part in the national movement, but his heart was there with it. He endeared himself to the revolutionary stalwarts and prominent freedom-fighters by secretly carrying the so-called seditious literature in his plane. He did a yeoman's job to the national freedom struggle by reaching the brochures, posters and other publicity materials to different persons, destinations. In the dissemination of literature of the independence struggle he occupies a notable place. He did this job stealthily, but courageously and carefully. This clandestine job could not be carried on for long. The piercing eyes of the British spy detected the devilish job of dissemination of movement literature by him, and he was nabbed and imprisoned on January

13, 1943. After two years in jail, he was released on parole in 1945.

He assisted the freedom-fighters in more than one ways. Gita Mehta, his renowned daughter, says that he sheltered the freedom-fighters who were on the hiding to avoid arrest and imprisonment. He was so much engrossed in protecting the revolutionaries from the cruel paws of the imperial police by providing them shelter and ease that his house was nick-named 'absconder's paradise'. She also reminisces that her father was caught red-handed for possessing a pistol without proper licence. She recounts the story that he, in fact, possessed a lot more illegal fire arms and weapons and, suitably and secretly, instructed Gian Patnaik, his wife, to throw them in a secluded spot lest further raids should lead to discovery of those weapons, should compound the offence, and should increase her miseries when he would be out in the jail. Gian, Gita recounts, a timid, little bird did the job wonderfully well by throwing the illegal weapons in a bushy spot at night. She was so miserly, Gita recounts gleefully, that she wrapped the weapons in torn and untidy clothes, especially tattered bed sheets. She did not bundle the weapons in a bit better, cleaner bed sheets. But the miserliness of Gian saved the situation. Later when the police discovered the catch of weapons, they couldn't trace back the house from where those may have been thrown out. They could never imagine that those weapons had been thrown out of the house of Biju Patnaik in such shabby and cheap sheets.

These and a lot more other anecdotes and incidents could be cited to show his association with Indian Independence Struggle. Those may be exaggerated or coloured. But what is as true as broad day light is that he was a patriot par excellence. The tall pilot was a taller patriot; the British pilot was basically an Indian patriot. His Indonesian air-voyage and his Srinagar expedition amply display that he was a patriot of the first order. As a matter

of fact, his Indonesian expedition shows that he was a patriot of a totally different kind — an international patriot, you can say, a patriot for the people, you can say. His patriotism was not confined to the borders of a country; it was confined to the borders of humanity. Indonesians or Indians whoever they may be — are patriots whenever they long and struggle to free themselves from colonial masters and to live with dignity and self-respect, and whoever contributes his mite in this endeavour is a patriot in the true and broader sense of the term. Patriotism is a loftier thought and higher ideal, and people who just chain it to geographical limits or historical linkages never know what patriotism really is.

Kaling was the most prosperous and powerful kingdom in ancient India. In military might and maritime activity, in trading merchandise and producing silk and spices, in mastering the subtleties of Sanskrit and Pali and in preaching and propagating the different shades and schools of Buddhism, it excelled among different regions of great India. In architecture and sculpture, in textiles and 'tantras' it earned a renown that was never accomplished by other people or provinces of contemporary world. Yet the current millennium adhered to the law of diminishing returns in all fields of speculation or operation. The down-hill journey was so complete that it was the most wretched province during the British regime. In 1936, Mahatma Gandhi visited the state and commented — If you want to see what poverty is, go and see it there in Orissa. The Mahatma never said so emotionally or idiotically. Orissa is the specimen of poverty even now.

Madhusudan Das, the architect and Ashok of modern Orissa, realised what the Mahatma said. So while he was playing the part of a Bismarck or Count Cavour in the unification of dismembered Orissa, he was more absorbed in dreaming of an industrialised Orissa. Those who know this grandsire of Orissa as the first of several firsts don't, perhaps, know that he dreamed to

make a Germany of Orissa. As a step towards that grand dream, he set up a modest venture named Utkal Tannery and became totally bankrupt when his venture failed due to his uncompromising insistence on quality products. It can be said that Madhusudan, a barrister by profession and a nation builder by passion, was a bigot when it came to prestige and self-respect. He was so puritanic as to quality of his industrial products that the venture flopped before it could flutter. Utkal Gourav, as he is called in affection and admiration, was proud to a fault when it came to self-esteem and prestige of the Oriyas. He wanted to alleviate the steeping poverty of the teeming thousands of Oriyas on the one hand and to out-German and out-Japan the Germans and the Japanese respectively on the other. My good lord! how could he survive, let alone prosper? Madhubabu, as he is fondly called,succeeded in unifying the scattered Oriya-speaking tracts with the nucleus Orissa, though in a lesser degree in comparision to prince Otto-ven Bismarck or Count Cavour, but he miserably failed in his dreams of modernising and industrialising Orissa.

So "Kulabrudha's" dreams of modernisation and industrialisation are dreams of every Oriya.

Biju Patnaik was extremely fascinated by the wonderful inventions and innovations by science and technology. Science and technology, engineering and industry are instruments of social transformation, a nation's progress, he used to believe. He was so fond of industries and engineering that he set up a small industrial concern named B.Patnaik and Co. Immediately it was renamed "Kaling Enterprises". The Kaling Enterprises grew from strength to strength in a very short span of time. Given the inflationary, war-ravaged, newly-independent Indian economy, and given his equation with Pandit Nehru, the uncrowned king of Indian Government and economy, it was just natural that Biju's business prospects and industrial ventures spread far and wide. By the mid

sixties when Biju was at the peak of his economic power, his industrial empire was worth Rs. 175 crore. Among his industrial units mention may be made of Orissa Textile Mills, Kaling Tubes, Kaling Tiles at Choudwar near Cuttack, Kaling Iron Works at Barbil, Keonjhar district, Orissa, Kaling Airlines and Kaling Refractories. Many of these industries were taken over by public sector undertakings like the Industrial Development Corporation of Orissa and some others have since closed down their shop and shutters.

From pilot to politician, transformation of a person may not go well with the public or pilots, with politicians and political scientists, especially in India. One can recall of the series of chagrin, that were hurled at Rajiv Gandhi, the late son of the late Indira Gandhi and the Prime Minister of India from 1984 to 1989. A gentleman-like politician Rajiv Gandhi could be praised after his veteran father Feroze Gandhi; but the son lacked the fire and finesse of the father. As such, every now and then, the Indian intelligentia and middle-class ridiculed him for his pilot's past. But Biju Patnaik was vastly different. As a pilot he was tall and stately. He loved flying but he loved more to fly for the men around him, for the country he is born in and for the men and women who are in trouble. As a pilot he warmed himself up with the sweet fire of freedom movement and always dreamt of traversing the ground in the footsteps of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who always influenced and incited this tall pilot from Orissa. He flew firebrand, young revolutionary Aruna Asaf Ali so often and under such hazardous conditions that he was a revolutionary and nationalist before he actually joined freedom struggle or active politics.

Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab, the number one politician of Orissa after independence and Chief Minister of the interim government after independence, could be called an errorless diver or relentless explorer in spotting and picking up youths and talents.

Biju didn't escape his all-searching eyes. He groomed Bijoy, as he used to call Biju Patnaik, for a role in Orissa politics. It is said that Biju was Mahatab's shadow by the time India won independence and worked like his private secretary. With the persuasion of Harekrushna, with the blessings of Nehru, and with the punching of his urge, he joined active politics and started the innings by being elected to the provincial Orissa Assembly from the Cuttack seat in 1946.

His first flash in politics exhibits his enormous dash because the 1946 elections in Orissa as elsewhere in India were meant for the veteran freedom-fighters who were old as much in age as in active politics, as much in customary patriotism as in sacrifice. Biju was a stark contrast, at least, technically, in being handsomely young and for having been in handsome employ under the British Raj. From then, there's no looking back. He forgot that he was a pilot and flew as a politician. In 1947 he represented the historic Cuttack segment in the Orissa Legislative Assembly. In 1952 he was elected to the OLA from the Bhanjanagar Assembly constituency, the constituency that has his forefathers' home in the small village of Nuagam near the Subdivisional town Bhanjanagar named after the eighteenth century Oriya poet who imitated Kalidas, Bhababhuti, Shreeharsa and Magha in the powerful and praiseworthy use of language, imaginations and diction in Oriya peotry. Bhanja, a scion of the Bhanja dynasty that ruled the princely state of Rasulakonda mainly inhabited by primitive tribes, was famous not only for his lofty poetry and intricate imagery, grand style and gorgeous wordplay but for his self-pride and oft-proclaimed conceit. The poetry of Upendra Bhanja stresses an under-current which could be deciphered as that Oriyas are not only equal to other races and stocks but are definitely superior to most. Biju Patnaik bearing the blood of that great Bhanja soil may have inherited self-pride of that great Bhanja.

In 1957 he contested from Jagannath Prasad, an Assembly constituency adjacent to Bhanjanagar. In 1961 he was made President of the Orissa Pradesh Congress Committee and the Congress Party participated in the mid term assembly polls that year under his leadership and direction. Biju chalked out and carried out his masterly strategy to achieve absolute majority for the Congress Party. His electioneering and his campaign were path-breaking; his publicity planning and canvassing for votes were notable in many respects. Till then Harekrushna, Nabakrushna and Biswanath were Congress leaders of the state. People in villages and towns, people who know the ABC of politics and people who are totally alien to that know these three stalwarts as the leaders of the then Orissa. Biju was known as a young, daring and adventurous pilot, a rising industrialist and a rich man. But as the Pradesh Congress Committee President, he displayed more of his flamboyant, cavalier fashion. His slogans— there'll be no thatched house in Orissa; there'll be only tiled roofs; I'll make Orissa Bombay — ring still in the ears of the elderly people who heard of and read those slogans coined by him. Biju was a tall man — everybody knew; he was a rich man and industrial baron many men and women knew; but none knew that he was or he could be a talisman. "I'll make Orissa Bombay" rang loud and clear in the voter's ears and the poor electors of Orissa voted for the Congress in a way they did never before, and the result — the Congress Party secured 82 out of the total 140 seats of the OLA. It may be noted that his mentor and political master, Mahatab was unhappy with his behaviour in ditching the "Guru" and in surging ahead in electoral and active politics like a whale breasting high waves. Other politicians of the time who were honest and didn't like to take the electorate for a ride with high-sounding, dishonest and impossible poll promises were annoyed with the Biju strategy. The shrewd Biju didn't fail to notice the ire and opposition to him

in the Congress Party itself and from the opposition parties. Biju won from the Chaudwar Assembly constituency with handsome margin. Chaudwar — it may be recalled — with several industrial units set up by Biju was the first place in the entire coastal Orissa to puff smoke from factory chimneys. The factory workers and peasants alike, the young and the old alike, saw in a Choudwar the industrial profile of Biju's Orissa. Later Nandini Satpathy, the Chief Minister of Orissa from 1972 to 1976 made the district headquarters of Dhenkanal an industrial island like Chaudwar.

Dhenkanal is as yet the political citadel of Nandini. She has so endeared herself to the people in general and the electors in particular in this particular Assembly constituency that she literally holds her fort come what may. In the post-Emergency 1977 elections to the OLA, she retained the seat much to the chagrin of many central and state leaders of different political parties. And you know who her rival was ? She was Maiati Chaudhury, wife of Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Chief Minister of Orissa from 1952 to 1956 and the celebrated Sarvodaya worker, who spends her "Tapaswinijeevan" in her sarvodaya ashram at Angul, Orissa. Malati Chaudhury is an epitome of womanly excellences and example of human virtues and sacrifices. Yet she could not vanquish Nandini in the electoral battle at Dhenkanal solely due to the fact that the latter's initiatives and endeavours in hurtling Dhenkanal forward in employment, industrialisation and other progressive enterprises were memorably memorable.

June 23, 1961 is the red letter day in Biju's political career. His Excellency, Ayodhya Nath Khosla, the Governor of Orissa, swore Biju as the Chief Minister of Orissa and shook hands with him as a customary gesture. Biju's dream of being elevated to the august office of Orissa's Chief Minister came true. After all, who're the then Chief Ministers of States ? BP Cheliha, Pratap Singh Kairon, Morarji Desai, Bidhan Chandra Ray, Govind Ballav Pant,

Pandit Ravi Shankar Sukla etc. are the persons who held that high office in their respective states. To stand shoulder to shoulder with them was a rare distinction, rarer accomplishment for Biju, the tall pilot but the dwarfish politician by many counts. And to him to be the CM of Orissa was the precursor to be the king of Kaling, the monarch of a vast and prosperous Kaling empire. Kapilendra Deva, Lalatendu Kesari and Jajati Kesari are the emperors and monarchs of the ancient Kaling empire who annexed territories, expanded the fields of trade and commerce, established colonies and settlements overseas and inland, and, above all, lit the candle of Orissa's pride, Orissa's glory. Nowadays in a democratic set-up of governance the provincial 'satrap' has some opportunities to retrieve and revive some such glories and aggrandizement — he may have thought to himself.

As the Chief Minister of Orissa Biju started with a bang. His non-conservative, goodbye-to-bad-bureaucracy attitude and cavalier fashion of embarking upon project after project was in chime with the time when Planning Commission of India provided funds for development projects. Modern, massive projects and enterprises for manufacture of goods and services were the hallmark of Biju concept of progress and development. To eradicate the frightening and fatiguing poverty of Orissa massive industrialisation and modernisation was his answer and panacea. Apart from his penchant for industrialisation and modernisation, what emboldened him was his proximity to Nehru. With his acumen and accomplishment in the Indonesian operations, he was endeared to Nehru, much to the envy of many front-ranking leaders and politicians of the time. The Chinese aggression on India on October 20, 1962 unfolded another opportunity to Biju to bask in favour of Nehru's patronage and partiality. He planned military strategies in tandem with generals and marshals. His keen acquaintance with military matters and defence strategies surprised the Army top

brass, BK Kaul, the then Army Chief, who praised Biju on this score. With a demoralized and derided VKK Menon as the Defence Minister, Nehru wisely banked upon Biju to chalk out operations in respect of the Chinese war. He stayed put at Delhi for days on end, supplied vital civilian and military information to Nehru, and carried out latter's missions and assignments promptly and palatably. At Nehru's bidding he flew to the USA to persuade JF Kennedy, the then USA President, to supply weapons and other war-time essentials to India. He undertook relief operations in the North Eastern Frontier Agency areas which were the forward locations and where the people suffered miserably what with advancing winter and what with advancing Chinese forces.

At the helm of Orissa's affairs in 1961, he embarked upon industrialisation and modernization. He encouraged small and medium entrepreneurs to set up their units and contribute to the industrialisation era of the state. He invited large industrial houses and magnates to put up some of their units in the state. He accelerated completion of major projects like the Rourkela Steel Plant and Hirakud Dam project which lagged behind completion schedule or slowed down in respect of isolated minor works. He persuaded and prevailed upon the Union Government to set up Mig Engine Factory at Sunabeda in Koraput district, a densely tribal pocket of the country, Regional Engineering College at Rourkela, Regional College of Education at Bhubaneswar. With munificent grant from the central government he founded the Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology at Bhubaneswar. It may be noted that he earmarked a vast chunk of land for the REC at Rourkela with the ambitious design of making it as sprawling and prestigious an institute of engineering and technology excellence as the Massechusettes Institute of Technology in the USA. On his own initiative and with the state's resources, he started the Balimela multipurpose project in Koraput district and Talcher Thermal

Power Project at Talcher in present Angul district. Several other smaller projects were initiated and completed or were only initiated during this period.

These projects and institutes are, no doubt, good addition to the state during his term as chief minister. But what glorify him, mystify him and lionise him is the Paradip Port. Any student of marco-economics knows pretty well that a major port is the navel for the development of a region. It acts as a catalyst for development and industrialisation, especially so, if the region like Orissa abounds with mineral resources. Biju, a brilliant industrialist, was mad with the idea that a modern major port on the long shoreline of Orissa was indispensable for industrialisation and economic growth of the state. With cargo handling and bulk-carrier facilities available at as distant places as Calcutta or Visakhapatnam, Orissa cannot benefit much in the exportation of iorn ore, chromite, bauxite and a lot other major and minor minerals nor can it quicken the entrepreneurial ambition of manufacture and marketing. Besides Calcutta was wearing out and Visakhapatnam was clogging due to the pressure borne by its vast hinterland. A major port in Orissa, Biju reasoned correctly, will not only cater to the requirement of the state but also to the necessity of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and part of West Bengal. But construction, maintenance and operation of ports are allocated to the Union Government as a subject in the union list of the Constitution. Furthermore a modern, major port is a capital-intensive project which can scarcely be financed from the meagre resources of Orissa. With his equations with Nehru, Biju was sure that his dream project shall come true. A relentless pursuer of projects and possibilities, he was on the look out for a golden opportunity to plead with Nehru.

And the moment came. Nilamani Routray, most often Biju's trusted lieutenant and intermittently his opponent, an Orissa

politician who enjoyed ministerial berths in Orissa since 1952, the Chief Minister of the state between 1977 and 1980 and a Union Minister in 1989-90, reminisces how Biju grabbed Nehru by the collar, so to say, and got the Paradip port established in Orissa. During Biju's incumbency as CM in the sixties, Nehru planned an outing out of Delhi to relax and recuperate for hours. He consented to Biju's suggestion of a sojourn on the Orissa coast which would provide enormous and enchanting idyllic panorama to the weary eyes of busy Prime Minister, Nehru. The Orissa coast between Paradip and Chandabali including Bhitar Kanika, Gahiramatha and Satabhaya are rich with unique and exotic flora and fauna. Reptiles and fishes, turtles and crocodiles, trees and bushes, creepers and creeks, forests and fields, primitive beaches and ancient butts, dotted habitats and lonely shores, winding rivers and steadfast pools, stormy seas and inviting waves, placid, shallow waters and deep, devilish gorges characterise the sea and shore here. The rare olive riddley, a riddle of zoology and a puzzle of biology, that is ubiquitous here is seen nowhere else in the world. The sea here, in short, is a feast to a tourist's eye and a pleasure-seeker's mind, a naturalist's brain and a philosopher's soul. The Satabhaya beach and the Bhitar Kanika sanctuary are things that would be lifelong obsession to possessive sight-seer. The Selvas forests and the Amazon delta, the Caribbean creeks and the Indonesian straits, the Equadorian creepers and the Equatorian reptiles, as it were, have descended over here for picnicking and parleying.

In a small mechanised boat are seated Nehru and Biju; Nilamani and other dignitaries and officials following them on the blue waters of the Bay of Bengal. Nehru, a lover of nature and ardent admirer of beauty was engrossed in the sight-seeing, as if in a trance. For a moment the old and ailing Nehru, the busy and musing Nehru, the no-nonsense and never-lax Nehru was his other

self; not the comely kid of Pandit Motilal Nehru, not the Harrovian adolescent Nehru, not even the writer of "Glimpses of the World History" Nehru. He got the location and the animation that his SOUL so assiduously sought and he was lost so rapturously, so completely.

Sir, this is the deepest area in the entire Indian coast and is eminently suitable for a harbour—Biju almost whispered to the pensive ears of the Pandit.

Biju, you don't have the slightest sense of time — grumbled Nehru most unkindly. How happy I am to watch the flowers and the fishes, the sand and the surf, the birds and the breakers ! Your port can wait, can these things wait for me ? — Nehru chastised him with real disappointment as his odyssey in the unexplored realm of beauty and harmony was halted by the utterances of Biju

Any other person or politician would have trembled and fumbled for words, would have been stunned and stupefied, and would have prostrated for apology. Biju was silent, not flabbergasted, for a few seconds, and then added easily — Sir, if you would not kindly consider constructing a port here during your regime, can Orissa get one ? Other Prime Ministers after you will be provincial Prime Ministers. They'll look after their states and constituencies. Who'll think of Orissa, a poor and underprivileged state of India ?

Nehru reverted to his cool instantly and smiled pleasantly — Biju, you won't leave me until I do your work— he commented softly but seriously.

And Biju's work, his pet project, a major port on Orissa coast was acceded to by Nehru. Paradip was chosen as the site for the new major port in eastern India. Nehru laid the foundation stone of the port. But the Indian bureaucracy which lacks in vision and dreams is equally incpt in utilising the powers, vision and dreams

of others, especially politicians and leaders. It always moves like a passenger train; priority and speed seem to be an anathema, pungency to it. Like a passenger train it stops at every possible halt even though there's not a single passenger alight or get in. The more Biju longed to hurtle his dream project with a jet's speed, the more it was throttled and thwarted by do-delay-for-delay's-sake attitude of the bureaucracy. From pilot to politician, from flying high to sitting in the secretariat, Biju was the last man to sing the bureaucratic sonnet. Despite stiff opposition from the Orissa bureaucracy, he devised the way to construct Paradip port quickly. Without waiting for provision of fund by the Central Government, without waiting for a hundred and one clearances from this ministry and that department of the Central Government, he earmarked funds in the state's budget and spent Rs 13 crore from the state's contigency fund for construction of the port. The Daitary Paradip Expressway which is the indispensable ancillary project of the port project was envisaged and executed simultaneously and in the same manner. Both these projects constructed initially with resources of the state were transferred to the Central Government. Adjustment of accounts between the Centre and the State has not been finalised so far. It is anybody's guess that Paradip port would not have come into existence, hadn't Biju defied the prevalent norms and started central projects with state's finance. The subsequent national events and tragedies like the Chinese aggression on India, Nehru's death, Indo-Pak war, droughts and other natural calamities squeezed so much the central plan outlay for development projects that Paradip port project was deprived of required capital for timely completion. Constraint of funds slashed its profile and pospects. Though with the tardy and steady availability of central funds it is what it is now, it could not be the deepest, most modern and massive harbour and port that Biju dreamt of.

Paradip port is a very important project for Orissa. Its hinterland spread over parts of Jajpur, Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts abound with iron ore. Exploration and exprotation of iron ore to Japan, South Korea and other countries through this port becomes an all-Orissa affair leading to employment to tribal people, generation of income to them and to the state through royalty and earnings in foreign exchange. Expressway running through parts of Keonjhar, Jajpur and Kendrapara districts serves as a vital communication link in these parts, especially Kendrapara, which is profusely and pictorially criss-crossed by several rivulets and branches of Mahanadi and was extermely deficient in road network before the Expressway was laid. These projects have vastly transformed the landscape of the surrounding areas and have brought in noticeable progress and prosperity to the populace around.

These two projects are important landmarks of Biju's charisma not only for their material, economic or development worth, but for the actualisation of Biju's high-falutin sloganeering on development. People were awestruck by and awakened to the fact that Biju can really make Orissa Bombay and can really remove thatched roofs for tiled roofs. The speed and the enthusiasm that were hallmarks of these projects are stories from fairy tales. Anybody — a daily ways-earner, a lorry-driver, a petty contractor, a party worker or a spectator — associated with the execution of the projects seemed to be chanting a new hymn, ringing a new bell or telling a new tale. Biju symbolised the projects and the projects symbolised Biju. Coolies and lorry drivers— everyone was enthused and everyone was up and doing. Progress of the port construction, completion of the port construction seemed to stir and fire the poor coolie and the 'sardarji' driver. The contractors — small and big — were roaming in the paradise and roving in the Nandan-Kanan. Plenty, prosperity and affluence

appeared to be their catch-words and they pocketed them in that order. To them success and progress had a geometrical progression. He who started with an empty wallet was bagful of money midway and was lockerful of jewellery and bank pass book by the end of his contract. Far and wide in Orissa the news spread like wild fire that Paradip is the centre, the sector and the treasure-trove of employment, income, riches and success. Businessmen and technicians from other parts of the country thronged Paradip to earn a handsome fortune, to experience extraordinary sensation. Oriyas or outsiders, whoever visited Paradip and used his hands even to lift a lump of clay, they said, threw his poverty and destitution to the Bay of Bengal and came back rich with Mother Laxmi sitting pretty on his shoulders.

Paradip generated a wave, a fever, a fervor. The poor Oriyas with their grinding poverty and sounding poetry did not forget to equate Paradip with the "Setubandha" that lord Shreerama constructed on the seas to rescue mother Sita. Construction of dykes, spurs, waterbreaks and other structures, they said, resembled laying the great "*Setubandha*" and Biju resembled Rama. After completion of the project, they said, Biju would bring to Orissa the "Laxmi"of riches and affluence from distant places like Japan and Yugoslavia. The coolies and contractors, the porters and drivers, the officials and the spectators, they said, are the 'Bhalluk' and "Banaras" of Biju. The poor Oriya poet did deftly identify that Oriyas are "Bhalus" and "Banaras", whether there is Rama or no Rama. He who was left out hurried and scurried to Paradip to do something as the squirrel played his part in the construction of the *setubandha*.

Rumours and reports made quick rounds that the sea swallowed stones and rocks weighing hundreds of quintals apiece. Some said that the stones and rocks that were dumped near Paradip were carried adrift as far as Calcutta. And the

superstitious few swore in whispers that unless human sacrifice were proffered, the stone would dive and move underwater like star fish or tortoise. Meantime if an adolescent or an adult left his home in a huff over a minor family bickering with his father or elder brother, it was disseminated in the huts and hamlets that that fellow certainly fell to the blue waters near Paradip. And they announced with authority that now the port-work will progress peacefully.

After sometime somebody spread the rumour that the missing youth was a big shot at Paradip port, riding his motor bike, residing in a two-storey "*pucca*" building, living with a beauty queen and playing with money as people play cards. And how much money ? — O, there's no limit to it; there's money in his cupboard, there's money in his almirah, there's money in his iron chest, there's money in his tin trunk, there's money in his metal box. Besides there's money in his pillow, under his bedsheet, in his bathroom, in his cowshed, in his drawing room, under the cushion of his sofa, in every nook and corner, in every basket and container, in every bag and bank — Er, how did he get that money ?

Eh, very simple. The night he left his home, he walked aimlessly where his feet dragged him. By dawn he was near Choudwar. He was tired and hungry, but he went on and on for Cuttack was nearer to Choudwar and he hoped to get some help at Cuttack from a rich "Marwari" or a neighbouring village Cuttacki-coolie. By 9 AM or so, he was at Cuttack and the OMP square to be sure. What will he do there ?

He has no money or premonition, no friend or face. And the OMP Square is full of dust and bustle. Lorries and trekkers, buses and bikes are kicking dust to the sky and flying eastwards to the only, unmistakable destination — Paradip. This fellow new to Cuttack cried out in hunger, anguish and anger. What'll he do

now ? Can hé go to Paradip ? It'll be better because there's work and money enough and to spare. A Punjabi driver spotted this crying Oriya youth and lifted him physically to his truck with fairy tale assurance that Paradip knows no hunger. And he reached Paradip by the evening and the Sardarji helped him to find work with a wealthy, bulging-belly, Brahmapuri contractor. And that contractor who rolled in money like a fox rolls in the winter sun was sonless. He died immediately after and this fellow became his sole inheritor. Not only that, he married to his pretty, only-one daughter who was really so beautiful that her nose-tip looked like a dew of gold. And have you seen him ? No, it's not me; it's my father's daughter's son's wife's father's mother's brother of the nearby village who saw him and told me about him — told the storyteller.

And Biju Patnaik was lionised, idolised and idealised.

Biju ideal of development, Biju idea of development and Biju notion of development is well manifested in the execution of the Paradip Port Project. He was not sentimental or sober in regard to development or industrial projects. It is rumoured that he gave strict and whimsical instructions to all and sundry that people associated with the port construction work must not be stopped, obstructed or hindered. Taking advantage of this, the reckless Punjabi truck driver who was stopped by the traffic police and sounded a harsh admonition for careless driving would peep out of the cabin and say — Paradip. Lo ! the police constable would make room for the speeding truck, swirl his short lathi in the air — You go, you go............ The poor constable had no time or temerity to check that the speeding truck was on a route that never touched Paradip. The highhanded and whimsical manner in which the twin project were executed by Biju earned him a few opponents in Orissa. Those political opponents amazed and damaged by Biju's dash raised the Paradip problems and perversion in every possible

platform including the floor of Orissa Legislative Assembly. It was alleged by the opposition benches that the speeding trucks and the cruel contractors crushed many pedestrians and poor workers respectively in the name of speedy execution of the project. Without semblance of regret or sense of remedy, Biju spoke clear-throated on the floor of that august house that one should not regret the loss of a few lives when a major development project was executed for the welfare of the masses of the state.

During his incumbency as the Chief Minister in the sixties, what obsessed Biju was massive modernisation and illustrious industrialisation of Orissa. Development of economy, industry, trade and commerce manifested his inner urge to see Orissa prosperous and powerful. From the mid-forties he had a golden dream to head a business empire, an industrial house like the notable few in the West or Japan and like the Tatas and Birlas of India. Towards this end, he established industrial units of his own. Among all the statesmen of the day, he was enchanted by Nehru's progressive, secular, international ideas, scientific temperament and quest for engineering and technological excellence by India. In this regard, he desired to copy Nehru copiously on the Orissa soil and to stay a political and popular stalwart in Orissa as Nehru in India. The third and most notable facet of Biju's character lies in his strong pride and pro-Oriya prejudices. He was painfully aware of Orissa's grinding poverty and blinding destitution and wished to smash and crush the crocked and steeping indigence by crash industrialisation and crucial modernisation. In this he was an ardent follower of Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das, but wanted to outrace him in view of his advantage that he was the Chief Minister and that India was an independent country then, unlike the time of Madhusudan when British exploiters had scant concern for the development of the truncated state.

The comprehensive and copious development programme

that Biju ushered in is easily overlooked with profuse applauses for his spirit and for Paradip and Expressway projects. It is more notable that expansion of community development service including formation of third phase blocks was completed during his rule and pioneering organisations like the Rural Engineering Works Organisation was set up to offer engineering expertise and service in the execution of small but numerous rural road and building projects. The minor irrigation projects that were constructed by this organisation added to the irrigation potential in a small but momentous way.

The Chinese aggression on India aroused hopes in the ingenious Biju that he would retrieve some of his lost ground with Nehru. And he did that. Nehru consulted with him frantically and frequently on defence matters. He was assigned the enviable privilege of persuading J F Kennedy to bail India out of the Chinese predicament. But the gains were momentary. Chinese war shattered Nehru's morale and popularity. The aging and weary Nehru had to reluctantly accede to dropping V K Krishna Menon from his cabinet. The god-head and halo that was attached to Nehru in the Indian's psyche having been questioned and criticised, his 'Hindi- Chin bhai bhai' suffering such ignominious setback, his international image and ego having been blurred, Nehru just carried on and was in no position to propell, prompt or patronise Biju. With a poor state's resources Biju could not gamble with more Paradips or Expressways.

The Chinese invasion saw the Congress Party's fortunes at its lowest ebb. Popular dissatisfaction with and disaffection for the Congress born out of climatic calamities and war-ravaged economic fall-outs could hardly be contained with reference to the saga of the freedom struggle or the charisma of 'Chacha Nehru'. The Chinese war forced the planners to allocate huge resources for defence projects and purposes. That led to resources crunch

in the pivotal development sectors. Biju bereft of Nehru's kudos and kindness was no more the 'Bog Boss', the Big B he was; he was just another chief minister and was doing well at that, of course. Yet misfortune did not spare him. To rebuild the sagging morale of the Congress Party, the then Congress President, K. Kamraj conceived of and carried out the famous Kamraj Plan, in accordance with which Biju laid office on October 2,1963 .

The famous or infamous Kamraj Plan envisaged and implemented by Kamraj, the then President of the Indian National Congress talked of three things in public. First of all the plan aimed at harnessing the veteran freedom fighters who were mainly interested in the spoils of office by then in the rejuvenation of the party by divesting them of official burdens and responsibilities. Secondly bowing out of the old was the best means to propell and compell younger generation to onerous responsibilities of office and governance. The third aim of the plan was to strengthen and widen the base of the mass movement of economic reconstruction and nation-building. The covert design of the plan was to divest several powerful Congress leaders of office because they were posing a veritable challenge to the supremacy and saintliness of Nehru. Another unwritten and unannounced aim of the plan was to dethrone several Congress ministers and chief ministers who were covertly or overtly first kin of corrupt elements. Biju Patnaik was asked to quit office more on the last count than on account of his organisational skills. Of course, his organisational acumen was already tested and he was more than the number one Congress leader of Orissa to instil hope and belief in the mass mind that the post-Chinese invasion phenomenon could be suitably tackled by the Congress governments at the state level and at the centre. It is pretty clear that by 1963, Biju was a tall figure in political corruption. His opponents and his unwitting admirers all spread the canard — the first category consciously and the second naively

— that Biju spun money for himself from the state's exchequer and central grants and donations, that followers and friends of Biju pocketed the lion's share of the state's funds and finances, and that the Biju era was synonymous with making money by silting public institutions and regulations. The 'contractor raj' that is so perceptible and powerful today in Orissa as well as other parts of the country was born and brought up just before the Biju era and came of age before Biju laid office.

Paradip and contractor seemed to be two sides of the same coin. The large scale small and rural development works like laying roads, constructing bridges, constructing public buildings, sinking wells, erecting embankments and dams, girdling reservoirs and tanks, fabricating panchayat industries shop-floors, building local granaries *et al* saw brisk activities in villages. Small-time and small- type contractors were in great demand. The local level officers, averse to mixing freely with ruffians and rustics and enjoying enormous authority to play with the fortunes and fate of the rural poor, picked contractors at their sweet will. The latter played to the 'merji' of the former by supplying free of cost, rich and attractive gifts in form of fresh fish, ripe mango and banana, ghee, curd, and cheese, sweets and snow-white rice, fresh dal and grams, artistic and costly local saries and hand-spun towels, candy and custard etc. The contractor pleased the bureaucrat's wife more than him with the free and fresh provisions. The Block Development Officer, the Junior Engineer, the Executive Engineer and other officers and officials have one thing in common — they are born and brought up in Orissa villages but hate villagers, village-life and villages as soon as they are 'baboos', but they fondly and frantically relish the salivating sweets, fruits, fish and cheese the moment they reach their bunglow gates.

The poor Oriyas praised Biju and Paradip in the beginning, wondered at the pace and picture of development in the middle,

but chided and cursed him in the end. They were aghast that petty contractors who hardly knew the three R's made crores within the course of months. Selected few, one or two from each village, became the *capitalist-roader*, the *contractor-roader* and amassed money. Their insignificant, muddy, thatched huts made place for splendid mansion; their courtyards and backyards all saw concrete flooring and dustless expanse and their ridges and fringes portrayed a pictorial presentation of coconut, casurina, hybrid mango, betel-nut and some exotic trees. Their position was as envious as a shipwreck reaching ashore with the minimal swimming laid hands on sweet and lavish delicacies without bothering for the *SOS* by the couple of other shipwrecks who were still struggling and swimming and crying out of hunger and for help. More than that the petty contractors treating Biju as their god-father challenged, for the first time, Indian taboos, traditions and values. Small officials who spun money on the shoulders of the petty contractors criticised Indian system and culture cruelly and savagely. Woman, wine and money were their watch words, their catchwords, their new-found fads.

Biju was succeded by Biren Mitra who represented Cuttack in Orissa Legislative Assembly and was a member of Biju cabinet. Biren Mitra, partially lame in one leg and a Bengali more typically Oriya than many Oriyas, was built in the mould of Biju. He was flamboyant and liberal, devoted more attention to public good than to legal jargon or administrative jaundice. He cared none but Biju; he followed none but Biju; leading to the position that Biju was the CM *de facto* and Biren the CM *de jure*.

But the arrangement did not last long. Students of Ravenshaw College started an agitation on a triffling incident when a student was manhandled by a nearby shop-keeper. The students of Ravenshaw College well known for their protestant unity

manhandled the petty shop-keeper and several others in token and impulsive retaliation. The police, true to their Indian tradition, reached the centre of the storm by the time it was half-fury and half-sorry. Instead of taking stock of the situation and assessing the sensibilities of the young and the old concerned, they started, in their British tradition, beating everyone black and blue. The young Herculeses, as the Ravenshavians should be called, did not melt to the police beating as the Chinese students did to Chinese tanks and guns at Tiananmen Square about 25 years after in 1989. They rebelled against police excesses and demanded immediate action against the erring police. The agitation, by now, has changed tracks and has targeted the erring police than the erring businessman.

The government of the day did not succumb to the students' pressure. As any good government should, the government of Biren Mitra did not like to be cowed down by the students' uproar nor did it want to punish the policemen publicly even though they were guilty of excesses or highhandedness. The young students hardened when the Government expressed cosmetic concern and exhibited we-will-see attitude. They organised the entire student community of the state. Students of all levels, all categories were united as never before, struck attending classes, and jumped to the streets. With the passing of each day grew the agitating students' determination from strength to strength and spread the fire of student agitation from cities and towns to villages and hamlets. Now the target of the students' ire changed from the police to the government itself. The students concentrated on their demand that the government should resign. It may be noted *en passante* that the inflation and economic crisis that visited the state as an aftermath of the Chinese aggression on India in 1962 were bitterly felt in the state and the student community alone was in a position to give vent to the acute distress of the dumb and mute masses. Besides,

the students rushed to Dr. Mahatab who in his own inimitable manner analysed things to focus that an incompetent and inefficient government is responsible for the irresponsible behaviour of the police and the irrepressible suffering of the rural and urban poor. The Ravenshavians who could be unerroneously compared to Socrates' Athenian youths or Lutheran collegiates wholly concurred in with the Mahatab perception that the trio of Biju, Biren and Nilamani was the cradle of corruption, inefficiency, inaction and chivalry. That was, in effect, *vox populi* of entire Orissa.

So the student agitation rose and raged the entire state. From university youths to primary school kids, everybody felt that he was a student; and, perhaps, for the first time in the state, the word 'student' generated a sense of dignity and responsibility. The shred of a student that used to go to the nearby Middle English School or Higher English School in torn khaki shorts and shabby half-sleeves white shirt with a bag full of books and a belly like a sagging pouch on the dusty, undulated and lonely village road under huge, dark mango trees and dense bamboo bushes nearby, beamed with happiness that a student is the most powerful chip around. He was astonished that a few hundred students on the right or wrong side of twenty lodging and lazying at Cuttack, Puri, Bhubaneswar, Balasore, Sambalpur, Jaipur and Brahmapur et al all held the government to ransom. His attention was diverted when he heard the uproarious slogan across the long stretch of paddy and sugarcane fields where on the muddy, meandering road originating from the block headquarters a long line of students, like a line of storks on the ridges of the paddy field, was proceeding towards him. What did they shout? *Odissare Kie Chhatara* ? Biju, Biren, Routara. *Biju, Biren Keunthi*? *Madabhati jeunthi*. In English, those well-coined slogans mean — Who are the loafers in Orissa ? Biju, Biren, Routara (Nilamani). Where are Biju, Biren?

Where there is a country liquor den- this sloganeering certainly matched that coined by Biju himself during 1961. While Biju's slogans in 1961 were romantic and brought him epic success in glory and electoral gains, those of 1964 painted him black and buffoon. Biju, Biren and Nilamani were hated by the people of Orissa as were Nadir Shah, Mahmud, Timur or Zengis Khan.

It is important to note that even during his rule between 1961 and 1963, Biju could not transform his electioneering slogans and manifestos into reality. In 1962 January, he persuaded Jawaharlal to lay foundation stone of another multipurpose river valley project at Tikarapara on Mahanadi. The broad profile of this grand project was to irrigate thousands of acres of arid agricultural land in the middle of the Mahanadi basin, to generate electricity, and to eradicate recurring floods on the delta because the Hirakuda Dam was not adequate to contain the regular high floods in Mahanadi during August-September each year. The project, one can safely infer, would have vastly transformed the entire landscape of many parts of Dhenkanal, Angul, Cuttack, Nayagarh, Khurda, Boudh, Sonepur and Jajpur districts as far as irrigation is concerned and of Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Puri and Cuttack as far as flood control is concerned. Of course, there would have been substantial submergence and displacement upstream in Boudh, Sonepur and Angul districts. As far as Biju is concerned, the project failed not due to opposition or resistance by politicians or people respectively but due to the devilish smile of fate that China attacked India later that year and the post-Chinese attack Planning Commission shrunk its wallet as far as capital-intensive, massive development projects were concerned. After implementation of Kamraj plan, Biju may have been de facto CM of Orissa, but he could not attract Nehru's attention as before. In the administration of the body politic, Nehru ideally sacrificed personal equations for government and administrative

equations. Biren could not plead with and persuade Nehru for funds and projects.

Biju, as ambitious as Brutus, did not lie down; did not lay his dreams down. He took the Kamaraj plan in his stride and organised the All India Congress Conference at Bhubaneswar in 1964 within months of his laying down government office. The Congress plenum was all glitter and glow. The poor Oriyas who were unwavering, unsevering fans of Jawaharlal Nehru saw him from close quarters to their heart's fill. Every Tom, Dick and Harry made a pilgrimage to Bhubaneswar, the Temple City, with multiple objectives. The first reason of his pilgrimage was the sufficient and six-meal "*Bhata-dalama*" (rice and dal with scanty cuts of vegetable therein) free of cost and as much as one can eat. The second and more important attraction was the 'darshan' of Lord Lingaraj and a galaxy of other gods bustling and wrestling in this holy city for an inch of space. It is known to the whole world that Bhubaneswar, once upon a time, had more '*Shivalingas*' (idols of Shiva's phallus) than men, women, cattle, chicken taken together and had, in that glorious golden era, more temples than the entire world had, one can say. Temples and idols, phalli and paintings, stone works and engravings, deities and architectural structures sprinkle and twinkle at Bhubaneswar like stars in the firmaments or flowers in a garden.

Oh yes, Bhubaneswar did not boast of stones and inanimate things only. In those days it bragged of a bio-diversity that could be seen nowhere else. Trees and creepers, flowers and buds, fruits and leaves, animals and reptiles, springs and pools, hill-tops and plateaux — all struggled and canvassed for a piece of homestead land at Bhubaneswar. Those who are romantic and worldly, young and leisurely can just pick up one pocket — the famous '*Kedargouri*' spring and temple complex. Literally water springs from hard and vast and tight rocks and abounds with

medicinal and miraculous properties. The barren taking a bath here can beget a score of siblings and the leper taking a deep dip here can be cured of his ailment.

Apart from Bhubaneswar proper, there are spots, girdling the town like the silver girdle that encircles the slender waist of the tender village woman, like Khandagiri and Dhauligiri, the former glorifying the great Kaling king, Kharavela and the latter immortalising the great Magadha monarch, Ashoka, which have to be seen at least once in one's lifetime. The third purpose of the pilgrimage by poor Oriya peasants, petty politicians and rural Congress activists and adherents was to see Krishna and Arjuna, Nehru and Biju in one platform, in the same dias for as long as one pleases. The Congress session of 1964 in the lush, lavish and enticing landscape of the abiding Bhubaneswar with participants, speakers and helpers galore refurbished Biju's sagging stature, repainted his begrimed decor.

He was about to retrieve his lost ground. But fate had it otherwise. Nehru breathed his last on his return from Bhubaneswar. Lal Bahadur Shastri did not have much of a good opinion about him. And as the last nail in his coffin, the students struck—struck vehemently and vengefully. Looking behind one can say that the Orissa students of 1964 were matchless and mature. Utkal University at Bhubaneswar, Ravenshaw College at Cuttack, Gangadhar Meher College at Sambalpur, Khallikote College at Brahmapur, Fakir Mohan College at Balasore, S.C.B. Medical College at Cuttack, MKCG Medical College at Brahmapur, Madhusudan Law College at Cuttack and Rourkela Engineering College, Rourkela etc were centres of intellectual excellence and adolescent aspirations. The student leaders of these leading colleges led the demonstrations and movement in the memorable Gandhian manner. Except for cases of stray violence or disorder, the movement was non-violent, peaceful and disciplined. Politicians

and go-betweens as sneaked into hostels or homes to break the student unity or inseminate fissiparous tendencies received rude shocks and stiff rebuffs. The student leaders enkindled fires and frenzy of India's independence struggle and conveyed the message and meaning of the Mahatma flawlessly and finely. In the hard rock of the student unity the ship of the government of the day was wrecked. It is interesting to note that in 1969 there was another great student strike in Orissa.

This strike, unlike the previous one, was supported by the government. The students demanded the second steel plant in Orissa as per recommendations of Dastur Committee. Mahatab, R.N. Singhdeo, the then CM of Orissa, Pavitra Mohan Pradhan, the then Deputy CM of Orissa and many other important non-Congress leaders openly blessed the striking students. The students mustered indivisible unity among themselves. Yet the movement could not spell disaster for the Indira Gandhi government at the centre or the congress leaders at the state level. Biju was isolated and discarded. Though in the Congress, he could not oppose the massive demonstration nor could he openly support the agitation that was for his pet project, the second steel plant in Orissa.

Nehru's demise and Shastri's regime impoverished Biju politically. Shastri, the poor son of poor parents, was Prime Minister of a poor country. Calamitous shortage of essential goods and services coupled with economic disaster brought about by the Chinese invasion of Indian territory did not daunt him to throw away ethics and scruples. Hearsay or true, stories and rumours of corruption and high-handedness against Biju and his coterie did not go well with him. What with the upheaval brought by the students and what with complaints of congressmen and opposition leaders against the corrupt, inefficient and despotic regime of Biju and his puppets, Shastri forced Biren to quit for a cleaner and more competent Sadasiva Tripathy who hailed from the far-flung

Koraput district and was more leaning to the cause of the country and the indigent, than to that of the corrupt and autocrats. Sadasiva Tripathy, himself popular and praiseworthy, could not save Orissa Congress from its downhill journey as he occupied the CM's chair towards the fag end of the term. The enormous unpopularity and hatred that Biju, Biren and Nilamani amassed as Congress Chief Ministers was a mountain on the back of mouse Sadasiva to pull or pulverise. Result, Congress was routed at the hustings in 1967 and Jana Congress, founded by Mahatab, and Swatantra Party, formed the first coalition government in the state as per pre-poll pact between the two parties. Rajendra Narayan Singhdeo, leader of Orissa Swatantra Party, became the Chief Minister and Pavitra Mohan Pradhan, leader of Jana Congress legislature party, became the Deputy Chief-Minister. It may be noted that Pavitra Pradhan was nattily outsmarted by Biju and co when he was outraced by Biren in the contest for the Chief Minister's chair after Biju quit under Kamaraj plan.

Biju epitomised in Orissa the anti-Congress wave of 1967.

1966 and 1967 are more memorable for Orissa on another count. The miniature of 1866 femine, popularly referred to as the "Naank Durbhikha", visited the state, especially Kalahandi district, during this time. Coupled with inflationary enormity, this femine reduced poor peasants and poorer agricultural labourers into skeletons and scarecrows. Due to the yeoman's service rendered by a handful of Gandhian and voluntary organisations, the corpses and carcasesses did not pile up sky-high. Of course, there were enough government agencies to remove dead bodies under the cover of night or during broad day light to farm lands or ferry ghats, to rural cemeteries and burial grounds where those were burned with the abundant dry leaves, faggots, twigs and trees or buried under ground with shovels and spades spread here and there in deserted homes and huts or were simply thrown on village

overgrowths, jungles or river-beds for sumptuous feast of jackals and wolves who howled and prowled homes and hamlets that had more skeletons than men and women who could scarcely raise a stick or a finger to the predators that caused trepidation in human homes in the very presence of many humans.

The officials and bureaucrats with their stock approach to approaching human misery and calamity denied in the beginning that there was any disaster of unmanageable magnitude; in the middle did they boast that the administrative apparatus was fully geared to tackle the heckling calamity by pulling its ears, and in the end they raised the appalling alarm that the disaster was unprecedented and required massive participation and donations by voluntary organisations and munificent public. It's another matter that part of the public charity was characteristically appropriated (please don't prefix mis-) by the competent bureaucracy which worked day and night to feed dead human beings and starve the struggling ones.

The state administration was a rudderless boat floating and drifting by the wind of high-handed bureaucracy, when the boatman, the political executive was busy in political and economic bargaining in view of the imminent elections. The succour reaching the suffering millions was a drop in the ocean and it was said and shouted by all that there was no resources to fight the half-natural, half- man-made calamity. And what about the state's resources ? Plain; Biju and his coterie have drained state treasury white to line their own pockets. Otherwise why there will be so bad cash-crunch to despatch relief materials to the starving, struggling and dying people of vast tracts of Koraput, Kalahandi, Bolangir and Sambalpur districts ? True, Biju and his hench men gambled state's hard-earned, whisker finances on luxurious and useless projects like Paradip Port and Daitary Expressway.

The self-opinionated illiterate public may have erred in

facts and figures when they made far- flung and wild allegations like this; but they have a right to do that and the sensible chief executive of the body politic should always fix his ears to such wild and baseless charges in order that he could verify, not vilify, them and take appropriate action. What did Rama do ? He is the most ideal chief political executive that India ever produced and is perhaps, in the best ten of the chief political executives of all times, of all climes. What did he do ? In the pitch dark of night did he amble incognito and alone on the congested and crowded roads of Ayodhya, his capital. A washerman couple, deprived and destitute like any inhabitant of Kalahandi district, were quarrelling and quarrelling. Reason-the woman stayed at her parent's place overnight and by that drew suspicions of unchastity upon her. Strange !

The woman pleaded, first politely and then like a prominent parliamentarian who can throw his mike-stand and paper weight to gain an ungainly point, that she was compelled to overstay for the night as her ailing mother and quarrelling sister-in-law so fondly pestered her to take off the daily drudgery of an old husband's thistled bed for only one night.

The washerman used to cleaning cursed, shabby clothes wanted to see the clean state of his wife's virtue. So he refused to accept the preromptory reply to his *starred question.*

The woman finally peeled off the beans — What are you saying, you fool ? Are you more revered than Maharaj Ramachandra of Ayodhya ? His wife, Sita, was confined to the Ashokavana for full fourteen months and Ravan was daily coaxing and cajoling her to marry him and live life queen-size. Yet on return to Ayodhya, Sita is the you-are-my-only-man wife and Ramachandra is absolutely happy with her chastity and charity. You bloody fool, heckle and tackle me for staying only one night at my paternal home and accuse me of immorality and unchastity ?

The washerman like a good legislator who most often uses his muscles and less often uses his mind opted for the latter course to curse---You bitch of a woman, what do you know of mansions and Maharajas ? Their queens are coquetting cats and are always at large, especially at their heart and at night. How does that apply to us poor men or our sweet little homes where the wife must stay with her man all 365 days of a year, all 24 hours of a day, and all 3600 seconds of an hour.

Ramachandra heard them with curiosity and was turned red when the washerman gave his verdict on the chastity of Sita. Reluctantly but according to a well-revered royal edict, Ramchandra exiled Sita, the goddess incarnate. My subjects are always right—was Shreeramachandra's motto when he took the cruel decision to banish his consort.

Of course, Biju is anti-Rama. He never minded what others who matter have to say about him, let alone the poor citizens. That was why his defeat at the hustings in 1967 was his Waterloo. Like Napolean, the hero, whom he adored and imitated, he sneaked back from the Elba of political exile and defeat, but he could never recover the lost ground, let alone the lost glory, till his end on 17.4.1997.

In 1966 Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister of India after Lal Bahadur's untimely death in distant Tashkent. In his thoroughly analytical book, *After Nehru Who?* American journalist-writer, Welles Hangen predicted before 1963 that Biju is a force to reckon with in the post-Nehru wrangle for the Prime Minister's job. Mr. Hangen commented upon Biju's support for Krishna Menon as the successor to Nehru in the words, "The only chief minister who will be willing and able to give Menon effective support in a bid for power is Bijoyananda Patnaik, the ruthless and unprincipled young multimillionaire who runs the state of Orissa, in eastern India. Patnaik is a kind of India's Huey Long.

He is addicted to authoritarian methods and will stop at nothing in his pursuit of power. He won repute in Congress by retrieving the party's fortunes in the 1961 mid-term election in Orissa".

Not only Menon but other aspirants for the post of Prime Minister after Nehru were also willing and toiling to befriend him. Hangen says, "Bijoyananda Patnaik, the youthful millionaire businessman who retrieved Congress fortunes in Orissa, is a more sinister figure. He could embrace extremism of left or right with equal fervour. For technical reasons, he has opted for Menon's socialism, but principles will never interfere with his political mobility. In the summer of 1962 Desai was saying privately that he enjoyed Patnaik's support.............."

Not only Morarji Desai, the fastidious Finance Minister of Nehru, but the other notable aspirant, Indira Gandhi counted on the coveted support of Biju to succeed her father. In *After Nehru Who?*, she (Indira Gandhi) condones the strong-arm tactics of Orissa's millionaire Chief Minister, Bijoyananda Patnaik, who is financially and politically linked with Menon. Orissa, she says with finality, 'needs a jolt'. And under Patnaik it is getting one.

It is interesting to note that the book was written when Biju was at the height of his power and possibilities. Hangen dismissed Biju as a contender for the august office of Indian Prime Minister after Nehru on the reasoning, "Patnaik still lacks national stature...." and "His most serious liabilities are his reputation for shady business deals and his dependence on primitive Orissa as a political base". "Nevertheless", Hangen said, "Patnaik is a man to watch".

Yes, Biju Patnaik was a man to watch as far as succession to Nehru was concerned. At least three aspirants, namely, VK Krishna Menon, Morarji Desai and Indira Gandhi, banked on his support. The lucky winner, in the post-Nehru prime ministerial post draw, you can say, Lal Bahadur Shastri was surely conscious

of his position and influence in influencing the selection of after-Nehru prime minister. But on May 27, 1964, the fateful day when Nehru expired, the fate of Biju lay totally low. He was ousted off the Chief Minister's office and was a provincial ring leader grouping and organising his gang against veteran Congressmen of Orissa of the day. The just concluded Congress conference at Bhubaneswar was all pomp and ceremony and was a good credential to his charisma. But that was not enough capital to bring for him any more noticeable prestige in Delhi. Besides all that Biju did or was doing was stained with charges of corruption and misappropriation of public funds of a poor state like Orissa. Gandhians like Gulzarilal Nanda, Morarji Desai and Lal Bahadur Shastri were never fishes of Biju's kettle. At the heart of their heart, they spurned him and considered his adventures and gamblings cheap and third-grade.

Thus without much respect to Biju's wishes or influence Shastri succeded Nehru. That may have hurt Biju's ego, but did not hit his influence or image. Shastri could not dare or bare him openly irrespective of his dislike or disdain. The unfortunate early end of Shastri's career was caught in a terrible whirlwind. Menon out of the race, Morarji was a serious challenge to the prospects of Indira Gandhi succeeding Shastri. Kamaraj and co who liked Indira as much for being Nehru's daughter as for her own tremendous talents and skills deftly sidelined Desai and installed Indira easily. The quirk of fate, Biju was not contacted or cajoled effectively either by Desai or by Indira ! The Hangenian "Sinister figure", Biju was not watched by anybody in this important drama. By then the allegations of financial irregularities and defalcations against him were so appalling that political personae who mattered in Delhi scrupulously avoided his company and counsel. Was Biju, the proverbial spider, whose gummy web was pleasant to look at but perilous to sit upon ?

Biju would have been happy that Indira was made the Prime Minister after Shastri. After all, she would be more sympathetic to his personal and political game-plan than Shastri or Morarji because of the good-old-days relationship with her. After all Indu........Oh, that spelt the disaster. Indira Gandhi was not a puppet or proxy prime minister as political *pundits*, opposition parliamentarians alleged or senior Congress leaders like Kamraj, Patil fancied. She had a formidable personality in her frail but beautiful body and a sharp and subtle perception in her unrevealing but vivacious intellect. Slow and steady wins the race — was what she tirelessly professed and preached as far as her aims and ambitions were concerned. The second and more important finding that she chanced upon was that Gandhians and freedom-fighters can fight and do fight, and when they fight, they fight virulent and vitrupet. It can be said in hind-sight that this single observation of Indira Gandhi stood her in good stead between 1966 and 1984 till she was assassinated tragically on October 31 and that observation of hers changed the course of Indian History, to a great extent, during the period. Indira applied that principle optimally and optimistically to all important politicians of the day, including tall statesmen but non-Gandhians like Biju. So Indu, as Biju called Indira Gandhi privately and affectionately, cut asunder the bond between the two. She sharply assessed the proposition that Biju arraigned by Mahatab, Pavitra, Bijay Pani, Banamali, Biswanath Das etc. was a political liability, not personal asset. In the course of six years between 1961 and 1967 there were four Chief Ministers in Orissa, all almost young and inept, a fact that was uncommon in political parameters of the day, and Indira never had much to do with the state and the Congress Party of the state which may demand her pound of flesh without adding any freshness or face or force to her strategies and statistics.

Despite Indira's calculated and gradually cold attitude

towards him, Biju hoped for the best and swallowed the bitter pill of his declining political fame. But results of 1967 elections — both to the Lok Sabha and to the Orissa Assembly — were too much to destabilise his foothold and alienate Indira Gandhi finally from him in personal and political plane. Biju's marginalisation in state politics and isolation in national politics were complete. The hypnotised Orissa public came to the shocking sense that Mahatab, not Biju, is the real genius in politics and the former alone can make a molehill out of a mountain in Orissa politics. Biju-Indira relationship reached the abysmal pit when the latter refused to concur in Biju's protege, T N Sanganna's nomination to the Rajya Sabha.

Biju is always too fast with friends. He never forsakes friendship under any pretext. An interesting anecdote amply portrays his amiable nature in this respect. During those days when his political position was on the wane, he was also threatened in his economic and enterprises empire. In fact, trade-unionism was gaining ground in Orissa more on the anti-Biju wave than on the pro-labour programmes. His enterprises at Choudwar was the first and foremost target of labour unrest and militant trade-unionism. In one such case, there was prolonged strike and stoppage of work in one of his units. His schooldays bosom and captain of his school football team, whom he hit hard to the ground and snatched the trophy from his trembling hand, was, by the quirk of fate, the labour leader organising the workers and disorganising the capital of Biju. Biju was there in the factory premises for a conciliatory effort. Bhubananda headed the trade union delegation in the meeting. The bickerings and bitings, the allegations and counter-allegations, the trading of charges were at their peak, when Biju started all of a sudden—Hey Bhubana, why are you barking so much ? Get up and come for a cup of tea with me — Everyone was astonished at the turn of events and

most members on either side guessed that Biju had caught the vociferous Bhubananda by the right horn. Bhubananda was himself afraid that the typical Biju tactics would force him to surrender to his dictates. Yet he put up a brave face and countered—Why you're a capitalist and I'm a labour leader. We've assembled here to sort out the problems of the poor workers. How can I have tea with you and agree to your terms ?

Yaar- Biju retorted-----We're friends first and capitalists and trade-unionists later. What harm is there to share tea here at Choudwar when we're meeting after a pretty long time ?

Needless to say, the conciliation ended in failure, but Biju forced school captain Bhubananda to have tea with him in the full glare of all members of the management and the labour delegation.

Biju would not have minded being rebuffed or rejected by Indira Gandhi had it been his own case. The rejection of Sanganna's candidature for the Rajya Sabha seat from Orissa, on the contrary, angered and anguished him. It was a political as well as personal rebuff, and it was really so for Indira had an unmistakable penchant to prop up scheduled caste and scheduled tribe leaders and would have readily agreed to Sanganna's nomination had he been without Biju's stamp. Thus the parting of ways between the two was complete. The Hangenian finding that Indira condoned Biju's errors and terrors proved wrong. Biju geared to start it again. Failure of the Hangenian finding in Biju - Indira relation was more due to the *hangama* of Biju than to the high-handedness of Indira. In hindsight it can be said that Biju addressed Indira as Indu, the very same way as Nehru and several of her father-figures did. Three years senior to her in age Biju could profitably address her so more affectionately and in private than in public places and speeches, more so when she was the right, revered Prime Minister of the largest democracy of the world and he a turned-down, corruption-tainted provincial chieftain.

Biju's *hangama* and haughtiness with people in high places is hundred per cent evident in the anecdote reproduced below. Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, the then Vice President of India was about to leave the Mavalankar Hall after a prize distribution ceremony of the Central Sahitya Akademy. Biju was there and was readying himself to follow the VP. An Oriya youth was attempting to capture a snap of Dr. Sharma in all smiles, but before he could tick he turned his face for the gate and the struggling Oriya photographer was utterly disappointed at this. Biju who watched the photographer curiously rose instantly to the occasion and turned the right shoulder of Dr. Sharma instantly. As a result he looked back immediately and with the same smile as gleamed from his face previously. The Oriya boy, blissfully oblivious of Biju's histrionics, was glad to take a shot of the Vice President. On turning aside Dr. Sharma saw who the devil was to turn him aside and asked that to Biju rather irritatedly. A casual, jovial Biju narrated the matter very simply. Dr. Sharma didn't murmur further, but he was visibly unhappy with Biju's *hangama*.

More than his haughtiness to call her Indu, Indira was concerned with the hefty corruption charges levelled against Biju. It is true that several indirect charges of misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds were later levelled against her, but, during the time she developed cold feet towards Biju, she was clean like the *Khandadhara* falls in Sundergarh district, Orissa and was appealingly allergic to allegations of corruption in high places and public office. More than the political rebuff, Biju was aggrieved with Indira that she, like her illustrious predecessor Shastri, lent willing ear to the unsubstantiated charges of crime and corruption against him. Mahatab, Biju believed, was the villain, who cunningly but covertly spread the canard against him in Delhi and daily.

1967 was the worst year in his political career. He was

stung by multi-pronged attack. First of all, his credibility and charisma in the Congress Party and among Orissa public were on stock-clearance cheap sale. Secondly Indira Gandhi shut her doors on him once for all, and, thirdly, the Swatantra - Jana Congress government of Orissa with the blessings and promptings of Bhisma Pitamaha, Dr Harekrushna Mahatab, and overindulgent anti-corruption sloganeer, Pavitra Mohan Pradhan, Deputy Chief Minister and Minister in charge of vigilance wing of the state administration, appointed the now-forgotten, then all-talked-about Khanna Commission of enquiry against him. The Swatantra Party leader and Chief Minister of Orissa, Rajendra Narayan Singhdeo agreed to the commission of enquiry in the best spirit of the royal blood — to punish the high- falutin Biju if found guilty of embezzlement of public funds or to absolve him of the raking and rotten canard of corruption against him, if not guilty.

The Khanna Commission took over the enquiry on October 26,1967 and submitted its report in 1969 January in a period of about 14 months to the effect that there was no *prima facie* case against the alleged colossus of corruption, Biju Patnaik. That the commission concluded comprehensive enquiry soon was an overt blessing to the declining demeanour of the redoubtable Biju.

How corrupt is the corrupt Biju ? Was it a well- hatched plot to malign and marginalise him through the weapon of allegations of misappropriation of the state exchequer ? Was his cavalier and damn- care fashion of spending public money and instructing others to spend public finance responsible to evoke suspicion of massive corruption ? Did he really make personal wealth off public wealth?

Let us, at the outset, quote Welles Hangen again, "The state, long one of the poorest and most backward in India, has become in effect another department of Patnaik's giant Kaling enterprises. Patnaik's business deals became so notorious a few

years ago that the then Finance Minister notified all government departments, "The Finance Minister will not support any project with which Mr. Patnaik is associated". Elsewhere he observes, "his most serious liabilities are his reputation for shady business deals..."

The observation of Hangen lacks pin- pointed facts and figures about Biju's assets and extent of corruption though there are indications for suspicion about his multimillion business empire and his ways of furthering his personal property and business establishments by subverting and sabotaging government agencies and restrictions. By then there were reports elsewhere that his business house was Rs. 175 crore worth. The fortunes of a person at this amount in the nascent and developing economy of India of the late fifties and early sixties will leave no one in doubt that most of the money was obtained through 'plunder without danger', PWD for short.

Gresham's law applies equally well to rumour circulation as to money circulation. Rumour of the day, at least in the poverty-stricken, illiterate,rural Orissa, was that Biju had many wives and many children; he had houses, buildings, factories and fortunes in Bombay (now Mumbai), Madras (now Chennai), Calcutta and Delhi in India, Cuttack, Rourkela, Bhubaneswar, Sunabeda, Charbatia and Choudwar in Orissa, in London, New York and Indonesia in the world and God knows where else. Grapevine had it that he opened bank accounts in distant foreign banks and kept wives in distant foreign airports and hotels and that his wives and his currency notes all were fat and '*chakachaka*' white; wine, women and foreign currency notes, they said as if they saw it firsthand, characterise Biju, make Biju and hook Biju. Biju's fancy for females and factories and fortunes — they whispered — is inestimable and irresistible, and if you stop him from one or all three *f's* — they whispered — Biju is enraged like a monster or

mad mule. Whenever a murder or a rape or a molestation of a woman takes place and the offender is not caught or detected quickly — the rumour ran that Biju was behind that. It was pretty wise to believe that Biju drank enough wine, spent much money for his chicken roasts and biriyani, gave lavish gifts and jewellery to the poor female victim, enjoyed her skin, curves and curls a whole night in a distant motel near *Khandagiri* hills or *Chandaka* elephant sanctuary and at the end of night just strangled her to death lest the incident should be circulated from lip to lip and in the press.

Who has seen Biju's legal, wedded wife ? Not even a few in the poor, illiterate, emaciated villages of Orissa that formed the bedrock of his popularity and power. When there's no wife, it is natural that a strong and sturdy man like him will run after women as a bull runs after heifers or a cock after hen. And about money. Who has counted all the money that Biju has ? Certainly none. And it's uncountable literally. See for instance lavish spending in Choudwar election. Mahatab, Pavitra, Bijoy Pani and Rajendra Narayan Singhdeo in their election meetings and campaigns always highlighted that their parties (Jana Congress and Swatantra respectively) had no funds nor donations, whereas Biju flew currency notes as boys fly kites to woo voters and legislators. And it looked true. The Congress candidates of 1967 elections in Orissa never experienced cash crunch to carry out their canvass and garner popular support. Who gave this money to the Congress contestants? None but Biju is the easy reply certainly.

Yes, Biju was a fund-raiser and fund-giver of a unique kind. Nilamoni, his confidante and conscience-keeper for long, stressed this aspect of his calibre. He was the star and stark fund-raiser and financier of Orissa Congress Party and could certainly outrace the veteran Mahatab in this political vice to dethrone him from the high pedestal. He not only financed the

Congress candidates of Orissa in the 1961 and 1967 elections, he even financed central and other state leaders in their electioneering. Nalamoni recalled after his death that Biju financed political personae of India from Indira Gandhi to NT Rama Rao. But he was not a petty or covetous fund-raiser.

Nilamoni narrated that once an industrialist gave him a cheque for Rs. 2 lakhs and was expecting a "good" from the tall man's broad mouth. Alas ! that couldn't be. Biju tore the cheque into pieces and threw those to waste-paper basket. In anger and animation, he uttered distinctly but in a low voice that it was an insult to receive such a paltry donation.

Avoided and neglected in the Congress, he soon set up his own outfit called Pragati Dal. He financed this regional party during its short existence. Later he founded and fully funded Utkal Congress, the party that brought him some lost glory, and was able to capture power in the state in the 1971 elections. Utkal Congress was part of the Bharatiya Lok Dal when the notorious Internal Emergency was proclaimed on June 26, 1975. In 1977 the Janata Party was formed at national level and he became President of the Orissa branch. He looked to the financing of the candidates of Janata Party in 1977 elections to the Lok sabha and in the subsequent elections to state legislature. In the last two elections , of course, he pleaded electors with his party's and his personal poverty.

As a fund-raiser for political parties he was at par with S.K. Patil or Rajani Patel and could glean huge donations to finance political operations. But building party fund by bullying industrial houses or barons was not appreciated or approved in India then. Fund-raising from industries and business concerns was a secret and sophisticated job which could be skilfully discharged by a select few and when bad days visited them, they were denounced and vulgarised like anything. Patil, Patel and the like skilfully

avoided publicity of their involvement in this shady and subtle practice, but the poor Patnaik was caught on the wrong foot. As a wealthy politician or industrial baron he also gave lavish donations to people. Nilamoni recounted an anecdote in which Biju gave Umashankar Dixit a cheque for Rs. 50,000.00. Dixit was the Managing Director of the National Herald Trust that brought out National Herald, a pro-Congress English daily bountifully blessed by Jawahar Lal Nehru. Biju literally threw the cheque at Dixit without handing it to him politely and pleasantly. After he left, Biju confided in Nilamoni that he threw the cheque to show his displeasure that he did not like to finance the press or the press people.

But in doling out to the poor, he is a doyen and debonair; he could be bountiful beyond imagination. On March 28, 1997 he fell ill, but sat in his chamber in the Janata Dal office at Forest Park, Bhubneshwar, the next day. A forlorn woman approached him and begged for his largesse. Without fuss, he fumbled in the office-table cupboard, drew out a bundle of currency notes of Rs. 30,000.00 and gave it to the woman. While he was on the verge of handing over the amount to the poor woman, his young assistant mustered enough courage to forbid him from this extravagant largesse Biju was infuriated and shot back — It is not my money. It's public money so I am distributing among them. You're a kid. Otherwise you could have made out from her appearance how desperately she needs money.

Not that he was well off by this time. On the same day i.e. March 29, 1997 he took out Rs. 10,000.00 from the famous Bira 'Mousa' his house-keeper in more than one sense. While recounting the incident of the day, Bira said Biju asked for the money on the ground that there was no money left in his account. Bira always tightened the purse strings of Biju lest he should spend his earnings and savings on charities and whims. Yet his personal

account was heavily depleted by the time we are talking of.

His personal finances seemed to be woefully little or precarious many of the time. As early as 1982 he was short of money to meet his medical expenses in the USA. For the coronary bypass surgery he underwent in the USA, the then CM of Orissa, Janaki Ballabh Patnaik, his arch enemy, most liberally and cordially sanctioned financial assistance from the state revenue. Of course, Biju's fans and followers did not relish the idea that he be treated in the USA with funds made available by the state Congress government headed by JB Patnaik. A drive was launched and funds were collected to meet his medical bill in the USA. Needless to say the individual and private donations swelled up soon enough and was sufficient for the purpose. Even on 29.3.97 when the young personal assistant was bold enough to chastise Biju in money matters, the former reminded him of his failing health and of his inability to undertake medical check-up abroad for want of required amount of money.

Money-wise, the Congress President and Chief Minister Biju in 1961 and the Paradip Biju were notable and talking point. The pilot Biju, the industrialist Biju was a prince, a prodigal son. But the Biju of the seventies was pauper, poor. Where did all the money go ? Khanna Commission cleared him of corruption charges. He repeatedly denied of embezzlement of public money and evasion of taxes. But who cares ? Neither the political adversaries nor the rumour-monger public was prepared to listen to the truth; they believed and lived with the corruption charges against him for better part of the sixties, resulting in his failure in the hustings, loss of personal equations and political weight.

The scandals around him, therefore, arose out of his highhanded and ostentatious flamboyance. Take, for instance, the incident in his second tenure as the Chief Minister of Orissa. He ordered there would be maximum restraint and economy in

the use of official vehicles. At one instance of the restrictive directives, he instructed that no official vehicle can move on Sundays. The proviso to this restriction was that if an official or minister was required to attend office on a Sunday, he has to do that by travelling to office by private conveyance; he may travel in a rickshaw, by a bicycle or even on foot. As an example, he started to the state secretariat from his Navin Niwas home near the aerodrome in a cycle rickshaw. The tall, old man enjoyed the sunshine in the open rickshaw while traversing the distance and the news-hungry, non-news-monger journalists and photo-journalists ran or walked or pedalled their bikes beside him. The poor, dwarfish city-dwellers, slum-dwellers immediately thronged the road to have a glimpse of the British era high-flying pilot seated in a modest rickshaw piloted by a poor Oriya rickshaw-puller. There was noiseless but vivacious hallelujah that Biju Patnaik is travelling in a rickshaw to reach office in no-official-vehicle day. There was news and jubilation. At the end of his journey at the secretariat gate he pulled out a hundred rupee currency note from his shirt pocket and handed it to the rickshaw-puller. The accompanying photographers awaiting this moment did not miss the opportunity to take a snap of the clear, crisp, right-from-the-Reserve-Bank currency note passing hands, dazzling in the superb, sunny daylight. Many appreciated the whole incident, praised the praiseworthy Biju; yet the few cynics who wanted to belittle the tall man's tall gesture decried flaunting of the hundred-rupee note as a case of ostentatious flaunting of his ego.

Yes, the cynics and critics had a point. In this as in scores of other serious and important things Biju becomes farcical. Impulsively or intentionally (none knows which) he melodramatises a grand occasion. Always conscious of his tall stature (both physically and in spirit) he did things which looked extremely farcical and frenzied to the poor, down-to-earth, small men and

women who ever dared to bash him. In this instance, he should have paid some twenty rupees as the exact or a little more fare for the rickshaw-journey from his residence to the secretariat. There is no doubt that the rickshaw-puller would have persistently refused to receive fare from the hands of the CM, because he had considered himself extremely lucky to have the Chief Minister as a passenger on his carriage. And, that too, a C.M. like Biju Patnaik. Frankly speaking Biju was not ostentatious or publicity-conscious in this incident. What he did is exactly typical of him— he always pays back to people, paupers, and princes five or six times what is their due or what is normal.

And this explains the charges of misappropriation from state exchequer against him. He flaunted his currency notes, gave out flamboyantly, rarely fumbled in the pocket or purse when it came to giving out. And that led many poor Oriyas and some poorer Indians to believe that he drained the Orissa treasury white.

The other and more intriguing aspect relates to his behaviour in regard to spending people's money. In the well-known 'Orissa General Financial Rule's book, there's an interesting section. The book, as Finance Department's one of the Bibles as to what to do and what not to do in regard to public money, exhorts the drawing and disbursing officers to treat public resources as private money and spend it frugally, not fancifully. Biju twisted this pompous sermon followed by officials and bureaucrats more in its flagrant violation than in its faithful observance. He exhorted engineers, administrators, doctors and technocrats who were entrusted with spending public money to treat public funds as their own money and spend it without useless reference to fiscal rules and procedures if the exigencies of public welfare demanded. He did not like that for a junior engineer spending a pie, the proposal must shuttle between the field and the secretariat several times for several months. But the junior engineer and his seniors in the

hierarchy took the right cue from this sensible suggestion of the tall man— they spent public resources like private money even if public welfare did not demand it or even if there was enough time and scope to get the spending proposal approved and sanctioned in the due fiscal process. Of course they still read and discussed this provision of the OGFR nicely and nattily themselves, by their doctors or daughters, by their auditors or tax-lawyers, well-wishers and friendly police officers to ensure that they are not ticked and baked in any future date for violation of this gospel truth of the OGFR.

It is, therefore, apparent that Biju may have committed minimum misappropriation of public funds but may have encouraged a whole lot of monkeys and donkeys to fleece the state treasury white. Besides and more important, his corrupt practices in regard to state resources may have been more transparent than under-the-table type' and the bloody Biju that he is, he may have been more excited and ennervated than disturbed and unnerved in the beginning when charges of misappropriation and mismanagement of public finances made headlines in the then Oriya dailies of 'Samaj' and 'Prajatantra', one edited by Dr. Radhanath Rath, the apolitical father-figure journalist and the other by Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab, the highly political, father-figure of Orissa politics. Flamboyant and fearless he may have anticipated that the storm may blow over and the flimsy charges of financial irregularities may clear sooner than later. But that did not happen and the canard of corruption hit him hard, cost him dear. In 1969 when the Khanna Commission absolved him of these charges, gradually when the people of Orissa realised, may be reluctantly, that he did not expropriate Orissa resources to the extent alleged, and when more monstrous cases of monetary misappropriation and mismanagement could be seen here and there in Orissa and other parts of India, he was exonerated by the Orissa public. But

by then the camphor in Biju was blown out and what was left was the piece of rag that wrapped the camphor.

He was mercilessly punished for the alleged mismangement and misdemeanour. He was ruthlessly rejected for his cavalier fashion in and attitude to spending public money. The poor state that Orissa is, it could not relish his flaunting currency notes or high-falutin frittering of a poor state's precious resources. The allegations of corruptions proved to be his Napoleonic Moscow expedition; he won a war but lost a career.

In the 1967 elections to the state Assembly he could not venture to contest from his pet pocket Choudwar for fear of losing. The Biju who braved storms and tempests in the mid-air and was fond of adventure, and misadventure for that matter, could not venture to fight elections from Choudwar ! Yes, the canard of curruption against him was at its peak by then. And the industries and units that he had set up at Choudwar were the breeding ground of anti-Biju propaganda. Factories and mills in Orissa as elsewhere in India, then as now, are the foolproof platforms for whispers and gossips, rumours and rotten-nothings. Paid well and led by leaders who thrive on their lung-power than on their brain-power, the workers and makers are the best negative trend-setters. The Choudwar factory workers were no exception. Choudwar being nearer to Cuttack, the then media and intellectual capital of Orissa, and Bhubaneswar, the state capital, was more prone to the anti-Biju 'hawa' than far-flung rural pockets. Discarding Choudwar constituency, he searched for a safe seat and was very sure that Patakura, a peasant-dominated assembly constituency in Kendrapara district and the pocket borough of the popular seheduled caste leader, Prahlad Mullick, would not disappoint him in the hustings.

Mahatab or Rajendra Narayan Singhdeo, the captains and chieftains of Jana Congress and Swatantra parties respectively,

were not very sure to beat Biju personally by any candidate of their choice. They were not interested even in beating him personally. Their collective gameplan was to humble his party in the hustings and dethrone his cohorts and '*Chamchas*' from the Chief Minister's '*gaddi*' and the government. So there was no serious candidate of Jana Congress or Swatantra Party in the Patakura constituency. The only candidate that stood any chance of giving a fight to him was Chakradhar Behera of the Praja Socialist Party of Jaya Prakash Narayan. Chakradhar against Biju, *a phu* ! Political pundits of the day scoffed at the contest. Chakradhar, despite his Gandhian moorings, honesty, and plain-living-high-thinking, principled, simple life, was less known in Patakura and lesser known in other parts of Orissa. With Prahlad's panache it was all but certain that Biju would come off the election fray with flying colours. Furthermore Biju would canvass for votes for himself and would make tall claims and air taller dreams for Patakura area. Who has forgotten his 1961 election campaign ? Who has forgotten his I-shall-make-Orissa-Bombay and there'll-be-no-thatched-house-in-Orissa electioneering slogans ? And why, he has done things. Has he not sunk the Paradip port, the deepest port in India ? Has he not laid the Paradip-Daitari Express Way ? Why can't he make Patakura another Paris or Pretoria ? Yes, he can. His election agents, friends, fans, '*chamchas*' and henchmen propagated the tall promises of taller Biju and in their characteristic, cavalier vote-canvassing style they sounded and shouted— *Chakradhar hai, hai.*

Chakradhar Behera may have thought to himself that he had lost the day he filed nomination paper to contest against Biju. But he may have also thought he can trounce Biju and tear him politically by ounce. Why, has he not misappropriated massive public money in the name of constructing Paradip port ? Why, have his supporters and Congress workers not looted the state

exchequer in the name of Paradip port and Expressway etc. ? Orissa must teach this public money-swindling Biju and his bandwagon a lesson and Patakura must be the pioneer— Chakradhar may have sworn to himself.

In the beginning Congress jeeps, Congress workers, Congress flags, Congress posters and Congress pamphlets invaded the silent, sleepy, green villages of Patakura. The dusty roads raised more dust to overcast the sky with grey dust; the fields and groves wore their coats of grey paint like simple, poor, rural middle-aged woman's paltry cosmetics. In the election meetings and the sky-rending shouts Congressmen shook and stirred the placid, clear water of Kani, Gobari, Chitrotpala, Mahanadi and a host of other rivers of the great Mahanadi system that crisscross Patakura and meander slowly their way to the Bay of Bengal like a pregnant woman traversing a green paddy field ridge cautiously and sheepishly. The swelling waters of these rivers reverberated — *Biju Patnaik jindabad.*

Chakradhar shivered, not wavered. He moved from village to village at the head of a modest procession of a handful workers, a band of followers. In the village near the '*Bhagavat gadi*' he started his political preaching. He may have looked like the disarming, red-robed Upagupta indoctrinating mighty and menacing Magadha monarch, Ashok, on the foot of Dhauligiri on the bank of river Daya. Yes, Chakradhar was as convincing as the venerable Bauddha preacher Upagupta and the people of Patakura heard him with rapt attention. Surely voters of Patakura were not nurtured by the milk of a *Putana.* They are sons of the great Kaling and live and breathe simultaneously with and similarly as their brothers and sisters in other parts of Orissa do. And what the latter were doing by the by ? They were hating Biju, heckling Biju, hounding Biju, grounding Biju, spitting on Biju, spewing on Biju, splitting Biju, slitting Biju, smiting Biju, biting Biju, dirtying Biju, routing

Biju, rioting on Biju, kicking Biju, ditching Biju.............Why should the Patakura public lag behind ?

The initial euphoria in propaganda and campaign for Biju vanished into thin air sooner than later. Dust settled on dusty Patakura roads; fields and groves reverted to their original glory once again; the twittering and fluttering birds once again reverted to their cool, comfortable flight in the Patakura sky; microphones stopped to blare obscene songs or vulgar slogans; 'Biju Patnaik Jindabad' shouts died down as quickly as they erupted from nowhere. Patakura was seized of the air of change; Patakura breathed the air of freshness and Patakura was caught in the whirlwind of anti-Biju slogans— Biju Patnaik down, down; Biju Patnaik murdabad et al. Chakradhar, it appeared, won and Biju Patnaik lost. Congress workers and activists fled Patakura; Congress meetings and campaigns came to a standstill. Prahlad was busy in his own constituency and was no better as far as public resistance and ire were concerned. He could hardly change matters there at Patakura.

Biju heard the dismal story from the fleeing field marshals and wounded wing commanders of his electioneering. He was persuaded by them—and he believed it himself — that once he toured parts of Patakura, Biju wizardry would come to play. Once he is there with the voters, before the electors, the painted up opposition and fabricated opposition to his candidature would melt as hard snow of the Kashmir Valley melts in the scorching June. Biju visited Patakura. After all, he has to visit his constituents and beg for votes. Yes, it is India and it's the largest democracy in the world. Here the contestant, the candidate can't ask for votes as a matter of right; he is to beg for votes. And when he, a rich man, an unbeggarly beggar beggs for something he practises deceit, magic, misinformation campaign, black-money circulation and muscular tactics. The result — once the beggar is a legislator,

thousands of voters and electors run after him, beg for his favour, beg for his presence in the constituency and beg for his sharing their sorrows and pleasures. And the beggar-turned legislator practises deceit, dissimulation, disguise etc. to deterge his relationship with the beggarly voters.

Biju visited Patakura; readied himself for self-campaigning. Henchmen and yes-men, sycophants and self seekers were sure that the wind would blow in Biju's direction. Lo! the wind did not blow in his direction. The wind cast by Chakradhar was less evident but more powerful; it swept Biju off his feet. Village after village, meeting after meeting there were fewer people to hear him and who thronged to hear him greeted him with rotten eggs, putrified tomatoes, brickbats and boots. Wasn't he garlanded ? Yes, Biju was garlanded with wreaths of torn slippers and thrown-away shoes, not wreaths of roses and jasmines. In one meeting a score of the old heard him crying and shouting and speaking at the same time, hurling invectives at Mahatab, thrusting explectives at the jaundiced vernacular press and hurtling selective abuses at the feudal anti-swarajya chieftains like RN Singhdeo. The handful of youths who tried to interrupt him intermittently through selected anti-Biju slogans couldn't succeed to disrupt the meeting. The cowered and coward Congress workers and activists who were mute spectators to the hullabaloo cheered up when there was a hush and the audience seemed to enjoy Biju's speech. All of a sudden two or three youths with smiling face and sharp contours proceeded to the podium. The dias-sitters and lotus-eaters thought to themselves that the beaming youths were coming to garland Biju with jasmine buds. Oh, the wind changes direction and the pro-Biju wind was blowing from the Paradip side, they guessed gaily. Alas ! the anti-Biju wind was too strong. The youths ascended the dias quickly and confidently and reached the tall Biju at the microphone. And abruptly they dabbed his one cheek

white with cheap calcium carbonate and the other with a cheap, rural, black pigment. The Congress workers on the dais were hugger mugger, but it was all over. The tall Biju with one cheek dabbled ash-white and the other patchy black resembled a scarecrow adorning a ripe paddy field in any Patakura village. Biju, the shameless he is, carried on and completed the day's election programmes and meetings with that scarecrow face. The irony of fate, the tall pilot who could scare preying Dutch fighter pilots was so rawly and rudely painted a scarecrow by the Patakura public.

And the election result— Biju lost.

This incident incidentally indicates an inherent idiosyncrasy of Biju — he never yields to vulgarity or vandalism. He bears it all brazen-faced, however badly or sadly he is branded or stranded. Heckled and humiliated, he feels, he can't be because others are short and dwarfish whereas he is tall and artifice. How can they reach his chest or chin ? Yes, time and again Biju has displayed splendid specimen of conquering vagaries and savagery on him with a shrewd face or a subtle smile. Does that make him crooked and mean or grand and serene ?

By May 6, 1993 he was Chief Minister of Orissa for three years plus. The state was in the grip of severe resource crunch. Donations, grants and assistance from the centre were so meagre that it could hardly cope with the bulging pay bill of government employees. Many people had many grievances against the state secretariat—poor and unpunctual attendance of employees, leaving seats and chambers at will by officers and other categories of employees, and non-performance were a notable few of the notorious many. Biju harboured the idea that the state secretariat employees flouted all attendance rules and all office norms. To give vent to his displeasure and anger, and to discipline and control the seemingly uncontrollable secretariat

workforce, he ordered to lock secretariat gates between 10.30 to 11.30 in the morning so that employees absent in office in the morning without sanctioned leave and permission be suitably proceeded against. In the first few months of his second coming, the punctuality of secretariat staff improved spectacularly. Next and more important, he downsized or did away with some old and alluring perks of the government staff. These included abolition of surrender leave, leave travel concession etc. Every now and then he chided and cursed government employees by telling openly to all and sundry that the government employees never worked so much as to justify their take-home pay packet. To cap it all, he appealed to the public in general to beat government officers who sit and sleep over decisions and were sleepy and sluggish in the execution of development and welfare programmes. Several reported incidents of public heckling of government officers infuriated public workforce. On the fateful day the secretariat staff heckled and manhandled the tall Biju on the corridor of his third floor office while he was returning from lunch. They also beat R.N. Das, state's Chief Secretary.

The incident was widely reported all over India and remained an indecent precedent of shame and stigma.

Insulted and manhandled, he didn't return home. He kept his cool and discharged his official duties for the day. Later in the evening a group of journalists, sad and sympathetic, met him and asked him about the incident. None was in any ignorance that the tall Chief Minister of Orissa was beaten by secretariat staff on the wide corridors of the secretariat. Yet the journalists wanted to glean the story firsthand from the horse's mouth. After one or two polite and short questions to him to which he made nothing-has-happened answers, one journalist put rather politely—Did they really beat you, Sir ?

How can they beat me — Biju beamed with a pleasant

smile — these stupid chaps had never played cricket. They do not know how to hit others.The young and old journalists alike laughed at Biju's humour and dispersed good-humoured after having pepsi bottles with him.

The slander against Biju that he bled the state exchequer white to line his own pocket gained ground due to the simultaneous and concomitant rise of his political power and industrial fortunes. The author of *After Nehru Who* called him a multimillionaire and called his Kaling Enterprises "giant". He was so much overawed by Biju's success in entrepreneurial expansion and diversification that he did not hesitate to call the state of Orissa as "another department" of the Kaling Enterprises. Welles Hangen noted that Menon, Malaviya and Biju were shareholders in the communist-line magazine 'Link'. His business fortunes were calculated at Rs. 175 crore, a huge figure in the then India. There is no denying that he established a number of industrial units and christened them after 'Kaling' ; Kaling Tiles, Kaling Tubes, Kaling Iron Works, Kaling Airlines, Kaling Refractories are notable among them. He was fond of 'Kaling' and christened a concern or occasion after Kaling. In 1951 he made a hefty donation to the UNESCO to institute Kaling Prize for scientists. On October 2, 1962, he brought out inaugural edition of 'Kaling', an Oriya daily. In 1961 he instituted the Kaling Cup football tournament. The Kaling Cup was a prestigious national competition in soccer.

The libellous allegations that he exploited the state's resources and agencies to further his entrepreneurial advantages cost him so dear in the sixties that he could not retrieve his lost fortunes in politics and personality till he died. But the Kaling Enterprises brought him no industrial success or economic gains. The Kaling Airlines conceived and in operation decades before Dr. Manmohan Singh opened Indian economy to international interaction and competition closed its shutters before many people

knew. Even in the height of his power, he could not manage the Kaling Iron Works at Barbil in Keonjhar district despite its location in iron-ore heartland of Orissa and amidst plentiful cheap tribal labour. So the unit was transferred to state's apex body for industrial promotion, the Industrial Development Corporation of Orissa, on 1.4.1963. Of course the magnificent Biju gesture is fully discernible in the transfer when one considers that this unit doing fairly well in business was transferred to the newly constituted public undertaking, IDC, on the Orissa Day of April 1, 1963. Kaling Tiles at Choudwar followed suit. Even the Kaling Tubes at Choudwar which was doing business for quite some years and successfully was taken over by Dr. Bansidhar Panda, head of the IMFA group of companies, and was converted to a chargechrome unit. Right now there seems to be no unit worth the name of the "giant" Kaling Enterprises. Kaling Enterprises of Biju suffered the same way as the Utkai Tannery of Utkai Gourab Madhusudan Das. UT brought economic disaster and bankruptcy to the bold and ambitious Madhubabu who ventured into industrialisation of poor Orissa. Yet financial failure did not defile Madhubabu, did not dishonour Utkal Gourab. Rather that failure made him a national ideal, an epoch-making hero. By more Oriyas he is remembered for failure of Utkal Tannery than he would have been for its success. On the contrary, Kaling Enterprises of Biju grew fast and initially brought enormous economic success. Later on it slid into losses and failures. And the failures eclipsed Biju politically and personally. More important, the rise and fall of the Kaling Enterprises brought in a lot of libel and dishonour to the ambitious and adventurous Biju.

Fate never cooperated with Biju's adventure or ambition. Hence, he failed miserably in whatever he did with the name of 'Kaling'. The 'Kaling' daily inaugurated with pomp and ceremony, blessed profusely by the Biju government, and with noted Oriya

novelist, short-story writer and politician, Surendra Mohanty as the Editor could not succeed, let alone compete with Mahatab's *Prajatantra* or Radhanath's *Samaj*. Similarly was eclipsed the mega sports event of Kaling Cup Soccer. Successive governments showed cold shoulder to this soccer tournament. The apathy dimmed the event so much that even Biju, CM of the state for the second time, could not bring back its lost glory. The Kaling Prize for Science and Technology being awarded by the UNESCO in the far off Paris survived the onslaughts that were made on everything Biju. The anti-Biju scandal was so virulent that 'Kaling', the Oriya daily, could not live longer even under the stewardship of redoubtable journalist, litterateur and statesman, Surendra Mohanty. Those who read newspapers in India nowadays won't fail to see that the dailies whether in English or in regional languages sing tirelessly the undeserved praise of their proprietors and editors, yet they increase their circulation daily. That *Kaling* under Surendra was too dependent on and patronised by the establishment and often closed its eyes to burning anti-government, anti-Congress news of the day does not explain Biju paper's total oblivion. Of course, the Oriyas of the day were more choosy and conscientious and never spared Surendra or Biju if they wanted to browbeat truth by the weapon of the daily *Kaling*.

In short, Biju was completely and compassionlessly crushed in 1967. He was routed politically both as a Congressman and a politician.

He was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1968. The stint in Rajya Sabha was expected to broaden his Delhi base and endear him to Indira Gandhi. But that could not be. The parliamentary elections in 1967 exploded the myth that Indian National Congress is the only national party and is destined to rule India for good. Jana Sangha, Swatantra Party, the socialists and the communists increased their seats in the 4th Lok Sabha. Though INC still

maintained a majority of seats, stalwarts like C. Subramaniam, who conceived and carried out the comprehensive 'green revolution' with extraordinary skill was routed ignominiously. Morarji Desai, disappointed twice in the past to occupy the august throne of India's Prime Minister, was adamant he should head the government and lead the nation. Indira's personality and perceptions as Prime Minister for a year past exploded the myth that she was a proxy prime minister. Desai was more Gandhian than Mahatma Gandhi and more disciplinarian than a Himalayan yogi. Patil, Gulzarilal, Chavan, Kamaraj, Nijalingappa, Sanjeev Reddy and the like were between the devil and the deep sea in the choice of the next Prime Minister. Finally, in true democratic spirit, leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party, was elected through secret ballot. Indira won and Desai lost. Uncompromising and irrepressible Morarji threatened to resign from the party and not to join the central cabinet. As a way out and bowing out to the Gandhian pressure of the 'sacha' Gandhian the Congress leaders made him the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister. The impasse was surmounted, but the ego problem of Indira vs Desai persisted, leading to resignation of Desai later on. In the whole drama Biju remained a mute spectator, not an active actor. The great thespian in national and Congress politics, Biju could not dabble his fingers in the muddy political waters in Delhi. He was inimical and cold to Indira but could not come out openly against her as she commanded respect and allegiance of younger Congressmen like Chandrashekhar, Inder Kumar Gujral, Chandrajit Yadav, Nandini Satpathy, Mohan Dharia, Mohan Kumar Mangalam, Lalit Narain Mishra and the like. This self-imposed insulation cost him dear. For the third time he was a nobody in the selection of India's Prime Minister after Nehru.

In the tussle between Indira vs Desai, the underlying contest was between Congressmen of the Right and Congressmen of the

Left, between Congressmen favouring capitalism and Congressmen fancying socialism, between Congressmen respecting democracy proper and Congressmen unknowingly favouring dynastic rule via Nehru's daughter. Perhaps for the first time it was an undetected altercation between Gandhianism and Nehruvianism. Desai's failure and Desai's fall surely symptomatises the disenchantment with true, vedic and eternal Gandhianism. Politics of expediency grabbed more and more Indian leaders by the collar. Obviously they were scared of recent calamities and disasters like the Chinese invasion and Pakistani war. Biju's heart was never so much with the stubborn Gandhian Desai. Leisurely and liberal he cannot be a camp-follower of Desai. On the contrary, Indira did not find any marketable charm or charisma in Biju. With the chasm between Desai and Indira widening day by day, Biju was being driven equidistantly from the two warring nerve-centres of national and Congress politics. In 1969, the split in the Indian National Congress on the 'conscience vote' in favour of V.V. Giri, a candidate for the post of fourth President of Indian Republic, pitiably pitted against Congress official candidate, Neelam Sanjeev Reddy. Biju was a helpless shipwreck standing ashore while the two Congress boats were drifting off shore.

Ultimately he started to sail along on his own boat. The august Kaling spirit and spark was ignited in his heart in his parting company with the two Congresses and floating his own Congress. He first floated the Pragati Dal and immediately thereafter rechristened it as Utkal Congress. The Pragati Dal, he may have argued with himself, cannot prosper as a political platform at the state level and with a regional leader of his standing who was misunderstood by the masses. Besides the Congress culture still reigned supreme all over India notwithstanding the electoral reversals in 1967. In this he also looked up to his mentor Dr. Mahatab, who wonderfully succeeded in cornering committee

Congress votes in 1967 elections on the strength of the misnomer that his Jana Congress was the real Congress. The 'Congress' in his political outfit "Jana Congress" enraptured the committed Congressmen who saw in that party the spirit of the Congress and the calibre of Mahatab.

In 1969 Khanna Commission concluded its enquiry and submitted its findings. The people of the state were convinced by then what with findings of Khanna Commission and what with disenchantment with the RN Singhdeo-Pavitra austere governance that the slanders against Biju were hoax fabricated by latitant foxes called non-congress politicians. As a result, Biju retrieved some credibility during the 1971 elections to the state assembly. Mahatab deserted the sinking Jana Congress to join Congress(R) headed by Jagjivan Ram and steered by Indira Gandhi. Congress (R), Swatantra Party and Utkal Congress emerged as three mutually opposing and almost equal powers in post-poll scene. An understanding between two was a must for a coalition government. Swatantra Party being more averse to Congress(R) than to Utkal Congress joined hands with the latter to form the government. RN Singhdeo and Nilamani Routray, leaders respectively of the Swatantra Party and the Utkal Congress staked their claims to be Chief Minister as both were Chief Ministers previously and were unwilling to work under each other. As a way out of this impasse, Biswanath Das, the veteran Congressman now in the Jharkhanda Party and leader respected by and acceptable to both, was selected as Chief Minister of the coalition government. But his personal performance in the 1971 elections was dismal and disdainful. A former Chief Minister and the present President of the Utkal Congress Party which did well in the hustings even at its maiden appearance, Biju was defeated in four assembly constituencies and one Lok Sabha constituency where he contested as Utkal Congress candidate. This debacle dispelled

his delusion that he was forgiven by the Orissa voters. It is interesting to note that his close friend Prahlad Mullick won two seats-Patakura and Rajanagar— in this election as candidate of the Utkal Congress. In fact Utkal Congress and Congress(R) fought neck to neck in the coastal belt of the state and the former had the upper hand as the results indicated.

Any other politician in his place would have opted for political *'sannyas'* after the 1971 shame, if not after the 1967 defeat. But Biju is Biju; he is the bloody, shameless Biju. He rose with a vengeance. Prahlad decided to vacate the Rajanagar Assembly Constituency as he cannot retain the two and he opted for Rajanagar as that would be ideal a place for Biju to try his luck in a by-election. Biju would have definitely dreaded Patakura that inflicted such ignominious defeat on him in 1967. Biju nurtured Rajanagar constituency from the bottom of his heart. Girdled by the Bay of Bengal and criss-crossed by slow, serpentine, deep rivers, Rajanagar is hunting ground of cyclones and high winds.

During 1971 fall, there was a terrible cyclone on Orissa-Andhra coast and Rajanagar constituency was the first-choosen worst victim of the inferno. Rains and winds lashed Rajanagar constituency, especially inaccessible sea-facing pockets of Jambu and Mahakalpada, for three or four days. Flood waters stood still and rose up and up each passing hour; rivers flew over danger mark; huts, hatas (market places), habitations, high grounds, trees, orchards, rural streets and village roads, narrow village lanes and zigzag water courses, rich, ripening paddy fields and coastal forests— all were tossed recklessly by the gushing winds and all danced mad in chime with drumming of the roaring cyclone. The sea joined the chorus. The Bay of Bengal was transformed to her devilish worst; it danced the '*Mahabhairavi mudra*'. High tide and tall waves knocked the fragile, virgin shore; then marched upland like invincible troops of *Aira Kharavela*, and then

submerged land, homes and hearths, cemeteries and shelters, groves and graveyards, cowsheds and cattle heads, vast, verdant coastal forests, long stretches of village roads, unbroken patches of paddy fields and uncounted number of women and kids. Water, water on a collison course— sea, saline water straining its muscles against sky-fallen, sweet water; sea water roared and advanced in successive files like marching 'jawans' of a vast army; flood water was in haste— it sounded and shouted its way towards the sea but was badly bluffed by the buffer zone of high tides and impregnable waves. Rebuffed and repulsed flood water stood strong defensively and its commander amassed further troops behind. The offensive by the sea and the defensive by floods squashed and squeezed Rajanagar. There was, then, a cordial truce between 'Indra' and 'Varuna', between floods and the Bay of Bengal— after all they are children of the same parents— and the sea receded to its previous position and the flood water ran into it as the 'Atman' merges in the 'Brahman'.

Lo, Rajanagar is clean ! There were no cries, no squeaks no yells, no howls, no screaming, no running! There is silence, total, errie silence — silence of the seas, silence of the skies, silence of rivers, silence of rains, silence of the air. There was uninterrupted, long, dreary, dreadful silence in homes and hamlets, in shacks and schools, in forests and thoroughfares. There was a vast, unbroken standing pool of water from one end of Rajanagar to the other end, from north to south, from east to west. Scores of slow-moving serpentine rivers alone streaked through the stagnant water to reach the sea. And the pool of water was strewn to the full with corpses and carcasses of humans, cattle, beasts, fowl and fishes. Deadbodies and corpses were as many as there are waves on the ocean. Bloated and putrid, stinking and sinking, rotten and foul-odoured, ghastly and ghoulish, clusters of and solitary deadbodies floated all over that vicious water. In twosomes and

threesomes, the deadbodies displayed cruelly and cynically how romantically lovers can cling to each other, parents can cling to their siblings in death-defying gesture and grandeur. And the entwined deadbodies of a snake and a goat, of a cow and a bear, of a wolf and a deer exhibited a bizzare truth that life is one and the animosity between different species of life is ephemeral and impulsive, not eternal and inescapable. The entire greenery of the lush Rajanagar was gone — it seemed, for ever. Defoliated trees and creepers, reeds and weeds, shrubs and bushes wore a ghastly, grotesque picture. Coupled with carcasses and casualities, the bare trees and leafless weeds made a gargantuan hell, a veritable hell. Only crows and eagles, wolves and jackals as still survived the merciless deluge roamed and screamed while they dragged and pecked at the deadbodies. These starving creatures had a veritable feast. They were choosy and chose delicacies at will. Without fear or favour they plucked and picked pouches of rotten flesh and stinking skin here and there. Voracious and greedy, they still fought among them to deprive their competitors and colleagues alike though they had enough and to spare.

The Rajanagar of the day was 'Yama nagar' incarnate.

Biju rushed to the spot in the best tradition of hypocrisy and eyewash practised by Indian politicians and leaders to sympathise with the suffering masses, with his eye to garnering maximum votes in the incoming by-election. On reaching the precincts of Rajanagar he was irked and irritated by the bloody, ghoulish odour permeating the whole atmosphere. The more and more he meandered on the zigzag, muddy, tortuous roads and lanes difficult even for bullock-carts and bikes, he saw through the glass panes of his car the clear picture of the cruel cemetery stretching from one end to the other of Rajanagar. Cries and wails as flushed off the feeble throats and emaciated mouths of young and old choked his ears, broke his heart, stiffened his wrinkles.

He was aghast and afraid. Death so complete and cruel — he never saw, never heard. His blood clotted in his veins, air choked in his nostrils; he was uneasy and anguished.

Government and non-government, charity and missionary organisations rushed to Rajanagar. All faces, all vehicles rushed toward Rajanagar. Relief and succour reached Rajanagar in plenty. The survivors and the neighbours all rose to the occasion and slapped calamity in the face. Biju was quick to play his role. He camped there for days on end, visited Cuttack and Bhubaneswar once or twice during the sojourn to apprise officials of the details and magnitude of the calamity and to instruct them to despatch more and more relief material. When Biju commanded whole of Orissa administration danced and drove. There was no delay or let up in regard to relief and restoration matters. Soon gratuitous food and other essentials were showered from the sky and reached by roads and waterways. Bridges, roads, public buildings as were damaged by flood and cyclone were repaired and restored to on war footing. Many old and dilapidated structures were pulled down and new ones emerged thereon. Many roads were widened and strengthened, many roads were black-topped and broadened, many missing links were reconstructed and many roads were laid anew. Many bridges, culverts, causeways and cross-drainage works were started anew, reconstructed or repaired. Subsidies and assistances in cash and kind were pumped aplenty to the hands of the peasants to salvage the lost and partly lost khariff crops and to embark upon extensive and intensive Rabi crop cultivation. Funds, seeds, fertilisers and pesticides were supplied to farmers and cultivators to take up whatever kind of cropping and cultivation they wished. Incentives and initiatives were aplenty to encourage the farmers to take up fish farming, dairy, poultry, shrimp culture, prawn farming etc.

Biju moved, monitored and manipulated things so that the

distressed souls of Rajanagar get the optimum benefit and assistance that government and philanthropic organisations can extend. Rajanagar bristled with ghee, honey, sugar and money. People were all smiles. Everybody forgot that a killing disaster visited the area in the recent past. Biju did it. Biju could do it. It is even rumoured that he fell out with Biswanath Das in regard to the scale and quantity of relief assistance to the suffering masses. There is, of course, no doubt that the kind-hearted Biswanath took all possible measures to alleviate suffering of the people; but he could not be, surely, as liberal as Biju as far as rules and norms of government, administration are concerned. Besides Prahlad Mullick and Pratap Chandra Mohanty, two important ministers of his cabinet and two trusted friends of Biju, marshalled and channelised the government apparatus to tackle the situation efficiently and easily.

Biju won Rajanagar by-election with convincing ease and margin.

After about five years Biju entered the portals of Orissa Legislative assembly. He was excited as a newcomer, because the 1967 and 1971 debacles at the hustings were so decisive and determined that it would be natural to think that he could never again enter that august House. Excited yet easy, he sat in the treasury benches. But the tall man in the seat of an ordinary MLA evoked discomfiture all around. Nilamoni, Pratap, Prahlad & Co could not savour that the maverick be a simple legislator. Even the redubitable Biswanath was uneasy with the equation. And most of all, the tireless Biju did not like to sit dumb or tomb-like in the treasury benches. Besides, he argued with himself, there was no need for the coalition government with Rajendra Narain and under Biswanath Das. Furthermore, he relished reunion with Indira who had become the veritable Victoria after the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. Indira Gandhi riding high on the wave of

her role in the Bangladesh freedom movement, captured the imagination of Indian voters so much that she secured absolute majority for her party, Congress(R) in the 1971 elections to the Lok Sabha.

In the elections to the state legislatures in the next spring Congress(R) rode regal to capture power in all states that went to poll. The so-called grand-alliance of Congress (O), Swatantra Party, Jana Sangh and Praja Socialist Party to humble her at the hustings miserably failed to defeat or downsize her. On the contrary, the PSP suffered so serious setbacks that most of its leaders and workers joined the Congress (R). Indira Gandhi now evinced some interest in Orissa politics. In 1970 Harekrushna Mahatab with a handful of followers joined the Congress (R). Nandini Satapathy, then union Minister for Information and Broadcasting was closer to her in view of her communist past and of her being a member of the famous 'Thursday Club' of the undivided Congress that stood by a struggling Indira intent upon establishing her supremacy in the Congress structure. Chandrajit Yadav, General Secretary, Congress (R) and close confidante of Indira, devoted his time and energy to strengthen the Congress (R) so much so that it enjoys power in Orissa. Biju was more impressed with Indira's spectacular show in the Bangladesh War of Independence. With election results of 1971 and 1972, he was in no doubt that she had ascended a political pedestal from which none — not to mention Patil, Nijalingappa, Sanjeev — could topple her. Her political opponents were mirages or myths, can never be real or noticeable — Biju evaluated the post-electoral scenario and announced so much to his followers and confidantes. He really applauded Indira's impressive personality and policies in the Bangladesh War and became a first-rate fan of hers. As a result, Utkal Congress decided to close shop and merge with the Congress (R).

In 1972, the go-between, Chandrajit Yadav pleaded with Indira to accept Utkal Congress lock, stock and barrel, but she decided against accepting Biju, Prahlad, Pratap, Ramakrushna Patnaik, Brundaban Nayak and Sharat Kar. Barring 6 of the 34 Utkal Congress legislators, all including Nilamani and Jagannath Mullick were allowed to cross floor. The Congress (R) government at Bhubaneswar was installed under Nandini who quit her central assignment. The partial merger, one can say, dismayed Biju. He was outsmarted by Indira so perfectly that he could not make head or tail of what she had in her mind. He waited for some time, hoping that matters may change in his favour. They did not. Once in the throne of the chief Minister, Nandini manoeuvred things magnificently and consolidated her position at Bhubaneswar. In fact the frail woman that she is she could stun her opponents and admirers alike with the swift and vigorous measures she embarked upon and implemented. Biju was no match for the manipulation by the two women — one in Delhi and the other at Bhubaneswar. He rose up to show them his position in Orissa politics by delinking his Utkal Congress and pulling down Nandini's government. Later that year he exhorted his ex-Utkal Congress legislators to leave Congress (R) so that the UC be revived with fervour and vigour. While 11 legislators headed by Jagannath Mullick obliged Biju, Nilamani and 15 others disappointed him. The UC was resurrected, but Nandini government did not fall. Later in 1973 Harekrushna with five MLAs quit the Congress (R). But by then Nandini with active support of the Communist Party of India MLAs maintained majority in the OLA. Her policies and programmes made her noticeable and fearful so much so that Biju, Mahatab and Rajendra buried their hatchet to fight unitedly against her.

In 1974 mid-term poll, Biju was elected from Patakura Assembly Constituency and was leader of the Opposition as head

of Utkal Congress legislature Party. Nandini formed the government. The years between 1973 and 1975 were turbulent and trying in the national scene. The popularity and prestige of Indira eroded fast in view of rising prices and corruption in the establishment. The Congress (R) with absolute majority at centre and in many states strayed off the path of good and responsive governance. Congress leaders gambled in internecine rivalry and pleased and pampered Indira to outwit one another and occupy the musical chair of power. The masses and the common man who found a veritable, adorable goddess in the lovely personality of Indira watched with hopeless disgust that she was being hijacked by hypocrites and sycophants. It is then that Lok Nayak Jaya Prakash Narayan appeared in the scene. A Gandhian who unashamedly differed with Gandhi and a Nehruvian who recklessly belittled Nehru, JP, as he is popularly called, gave up active politics for some time past. The Congress regime at centre and the states for the past decade, after the Chinese debacle to be precise, hurt him. He was afraid the sacrifices by hundreds and hundreds of freedom-fighters were being desecrated and the common people who so fondly dreamt of Swaraj were helplessly eschewing *corruption-raj, costly-raj and selfish-raj*. A firebrand at heart he did not lie low. He started the famous "Total Revolution". It must be noted the veteran JP was immensely moved by the student movement in Gujarat in 1973 that vehemently protested against corrupt, inefficient and unsympathetic Congress government of the state. The movement occasionally marred by violence and vengeance once again proved how effective is Mahatma Gandhi when it comes to non-violent agitation for a just cause. Indira, it could be remembered, tripped the U S leadership and stupefied the international community by her swift, sharp and courageous action in the Bangladesh War. Her power within the borders of India was simply unassailable and unchallengeable after that historic

adventure. But she was harassed by the students of Gujarat. She succumbed to the students' demand Number One of removing the corrupt and collusive government of Chimanbhai Mehta.

J P ignited a fire of a unique kind. Youths and students were enchanted by his exhortations and rhetoric. In fact, a comprehensive and almost utopian concept like the Total Revolution became totally sensible and commonplace in its comprehension and implementation by the students and youths. Completely Gandhian methods of non-violence and peace increased the clientele of the agitation and inflated the circle of the revolution. Thousands and thousands of the young marched on the streets and shouted slogans — We want Total Revolution, Jaya Prakash Jindabad. The 'Total Revolution' propounded by J P vis-a-vis the totalitarian attitude of Indira Gandhi; ironically, needled towards the same centre— the unprecedented economic crisis facing the country. Indira won the Bangladesh Liberation War on the international arena but was badly defeated in the Indian turf. About 10 million Bangladeshi refugees sought shelter in India and caused a heavy drain on the tottering economy of the country. The war proper cost enormously in the utilisation of money and material resources. The 1973 War between Israel and the Arab world enhanced prices of petroleum products to an all-time high as a fall-out of that massive confrontation. In an already badly-placed under-developed economy, the soaring petroleum prices whipped up inflation in geometrical progression. What with the Middle-East War, what with the Bangladesh Liberation War, the fledgling, labouring Indian economy faced the most terrible economic calamity.

In 1971-72 elections to the Lok Sabha and state legislatures, Indira rode high as much on the electors' appreciation of her daring in the Bangladesh War as on her slogan of '*Garibi hatao*'. There's no denying that economic disparity and

concentration of wealth on fewer hands, fewer heads, fewer houses were the glaring economic epidemics of the seventies as now. Notwithstanding her histrionics, she had a noble acre in her heart flowing with the milk of human kindness. When she vowed to fight poverty, push poverty, banish destitution, punish deprivation and tarnish indigence, she was greeted with alacrity and showered with accolades for having invented an indigenous means to beat poverty of the masses with massive success. Indira wasn't indifferent to the poor's colour and the squalor as was evident in her historic decisions to abolish the privy purse of the royal scions and to nationalise banks. The first demonstrated her indemonstrable loathe for medieval and legendary aristocracy still subsisting in free India and the second displayed her economic ingenuity to find funds and finances for small, marginal and rural artisans and entrepreneurs. Yet seething under international publicity onslaught and paralysed by the unholy nexus of petty politicians, selfish bureaucrats and hackneyed institutions, she utterly failed to obliterate mass and massive poverty from the face of India. Her noble dream was so much thwarted, so much corrupted and so much plagued by the time of JP's revolution that it was '*garib hatao*' instead of '*garibi gatao*'—push the poor from all possible opportunities and privileges instead of pushing poverty from all possible quarters and sectors of the country. The historic slogan 'garibi hatao' was so much maligned and misplaced that Indira didn't venture to hobnob with that again in 1980 when she came to power with a massive mandate. Instead she embarked upon the poverty alleviation schemes which still reign the welfare economics agenda of the country notwithstanding the change in the helm of affairs in Delhi.

In the beginning Indira neglected the movement as a short-lived whimper. Later on she ascribed it to American meddling and instigation in Indian affairs and desired to beat them in their

own game. So posters and wall-writings appeared aplenty that JP is a CIA 'dalal' ; JP is a capitalist and retainer of Tata and Birla. The propaganda war between JP and Indira—the latter spending more resources and getting less results and the former spending much less and reaping spontaneous responses—did not stem the tide of the Total Revolution. More and more politicians lent their what-they-had moral support to JP. Even scores of Congress leaders disgruntled with an eccentric and autocratic Indira lent tacit support to the TR. Indira kept her spirits up, put up a brave face; she behaved as if nothing important or intricate was happening by this sort of thing called TR. She was aslo convinced that the temporarily mammoth movement would fizzle, would die down, would puncture on its own. That was not to be. The movement mainly incubated in university campuses and nourished in college common-rooms and play-grounds grew from strength to strength, spread from town to town and drew more and more crowds each passing day. Mohan Dharia, the young Turk, who fought for her against the onslaught of Congress old-timers, Minister for Housing and Urban Development in her Council of Ministers, pleaded with Indira to have a direct dialogue with JP as to his motives and message. He was dropped for this braggart. Chandrashekhar, the good old companion to stand by her in a rainy day, advocated Dharia line, and quit the Congress when his suggestions fell on deaf ears. He made a monumental flag-bearer of the TR and the second in command of the movement.

Economic crisis and political unrest made matters worse for the common man for about two years. No ice melted on either side—Indira not budging, JP not easing.

In 1975 April came out the famous Allahabad High Court Judgement unseating Indira Gandhi as MP from Rai Barelli in UP and declaring Raj Narayan, a staunch Lohiaist and an ardent follower of JP as the winner instead. There was tremor and

terror. Indira was shocked and scared. JP was more emboldened and more justified to demand her ouster. He even went to the extent of exhorting the Indian Army to defy commands from the illegal government of Indira Gandhi. The processions and public meetings by Congressmen to exhibit that they stood solidly behind her could not contain the upsurge of opposition and violence that broke against her door. As a way out, she promulgated internal Emergency on June 26, 1975.

The promulgation of internal Emergency on June 26, 1975 followed by the 'Judgement' on June 12, 1975 — the former following the latter after a fortnight — became the turning point in the contemporary political history of India. With all his saga and sermons JP could not carry his TR very far. In spite of initial euphoria generated by it, it could not sustain itself against the heavy odds notwithstanding the outstanding contribution to the cause by heavyweights like Chandrashekhar. But the Allahabad High Court judgement unnerving Indira to the bone and panicking her *yes-madam* men to their spine triggered a series of hasty, un-Indira-like actions culminating in the Emergency. And that forgettable incident alone damaged the reputation and popularity of Indira to the hilt and salvaged the spirits of JP to commanding heights. On June 26 itself, top-rung leaders like JP, Morarji, JB Kripalini, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani, Choudhury Charan Singh, Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab and the like were arrested under the draconian provisions of Maintenance of Internal Security Act.

Biju was arrested under MISA on June 26, 1975. Nandini; by then strong politically and headstrong in administration usually, made good use of MISA and the Defence of India Rules and cornered Biju, Mahatab, Rajendra Narayan, Pratap, Prahlad and other opposition leaders of substance and shadow behind the bar. The press censorship and the horror of the Emergency rule so sequestered them from one another that they did not know in

which prison who was. The opposition leaders all over the country must have counted that the prison gates were locked to them for ever. Only Gandhians like Desai who believe in the power of non-violence, truth and love and who are fanatical followers of the Mahatma may have believed, while spinning cotton yarn in their primitive type spinning wheels (charakha) that that phase was a temporary aberration of the great Swaraj that Gandhi and other godheads so assiduously fought for.

Towards the end of 1976 Biju was released on parole on health grounds. He attended the winter session of the Orissa Legislative Assembly as leader of the Opposition and hurled spiteful tirade against Nandini. He alluded to the sorrows and suffering of the weak, underprivileged and poor during the Emergency era on the one hand and the atrocious, illicit activities of Congressmen and officials on the other.

In the same breath, of course, he heaped applauses on Indira, who, as he said, had brought discipline and prosperity to the country and her people. The delicate demagogy that Biju displayed then was really intriguing and animating. He could denounce and deride the Congress government and Congress Chief Minister of the state but could praise the Congress Prime Minister of the country in the same place, at the same time and in the same speech. Why did Biju praise Indira ? The revered Vinoba Bhave of Paunar Ashram in Wardha who renounced active politics in independent India to engage himself in the immortally Gandhian yet revolutionary land-reforms programme, *Bhoodan Yajna*, who imbibed thousands and thousands of freedom-fighters, youths and true Gandhians with the message and presage of this constructive programme, and who observed '*maunavrata*' (the vow of silence) for some time past also hailed Indira for heralding a new era of discipline and restraint in India.

Yes, the Emergency era was a lot good for the common

man. One can agree with the saintly and selfless Vinoba that "*anusasana parva*" was ushered in the garb of the Emergency. The economic mess of the past 3 or 4 years was completely cleared. Businessmen, traders, industrialists, hoarders, black-marketeers and racketeers, all on a sudden, subscribed to the highest ethics in trade and commerce. Perhaps, the first time in free India they uttered to themselves and utilised the age-old adage—Honesty is the best policy. Prices of essential commodities fell day by day. Manufactured goods and merchandise were aplenty. Each economic regulation of the government was practised by the trade circle fastidiously and to a fault. The display board in front of small outlets sufficiently and sincerely indicated the rates and quantities of articles inside. Trains and planes ran and flew on time. Public conveyance was amazingly punctual. Attendance in offices and workplaces was in accordance with the work code. Delay French leave, unauthorised but unpunished leave and so on became bad habits of old past. More than that the 'baboos' behind broad table and amid stacks of files were elegant and egalitarian. They did their job promptly and punctually. Perhaps, for the first time in free India the bureaucracy tightened its grip on official work to quicken disposal of business to ameliorate the deteriorating socio-economic condition of the masses. They implemented the famous 20 point Economic Programme launched by the Prime Minister on July 1, 1975.

But the Emergency is notorious for its black spots. The arbitrary and autocratic attitude of people in high places besmirched and befouled its gains. Freedom of the people and the press was so much suppressed that the dictatorial, despotic rule at the centre and the state level could not come to light. The Parliament and the state legislatures laboured pitiably and precariously under the constant and cruel watch of the Prime Minister and the respective Chief Ministers. In short, fear, not freedom, was the reigning

principle during the day. Obstinate, adamant and atrocious measures like forcible sterilisation resorted to by the officials to please Sanjay Gandhi and achieve targets in astronomical figures drove many people to utter misery and simple madness. It was alleged that young couples with not a single child were forced to vasectomy or tubectomy; old and infirm people who were long past their reproductive urge or age were compelled to undergo family planning operation, and couples who adopted family planning methods on their own and at the right time were picked from homes in wrong hour of the night to the nearby dilapidated building called a hospital to taste the pinching and punching of knives and scissors, spirit and razors.

Tree plantation and afforestation, another pet programme of Sanjay was implemented with equal horror and haste. None heeded to any sensible suggestion. All other programmes were relegated to the background to make money, men, official machinery available for this scheme-Tree plantation and afforestation seemed to be the Koran of the officialdom who proceeded with it madly and badly. Not real trees, not even bushes, mattered to them; what mattered to them is trees—young or old, short or tall, leafy or defoliated, indigenous or exotic, on the roadside or canal embankment, in forest or fields—and trees, no matter whether they are alive or dead, on the earth or on paper. The 'target ' of plantation, not trees, afforestation and saplings obsessed the bureaucracy, the politicians. If fear was ubiquitous as far as political and individual freedom is concerned, 'force' was unmistakably evident in the implementation of the economic programmes. Plantation, sterilisation and dowry-prohibition etc, the pet programmes of Sanjay are extremely commendable in themselves. The all-pervasive pamphlet, hoarding and wall-writing of the day—Less children more trees, less gossip more work — are eminently suited to India if one proposes to place this vast

country on the path of progress and prosperity. A handful of highhanded politicians and scores of unscrupulous officials derailed the grand agenda of the Emergency to satisfy their personal, selfish quest and zest.

Anyway the Emergency was a gauddy bowl of Biriyani with more meat and spices than rice so as to induce more indigestion and spew than healthful calories and nourishment to the politics or economy of India.

Towards the end of 1976, the rigours and vigours of the Emergency were on the wane. Indira Gandhi was smeared with stain and stigma of an unthinkable kind by the sinister and selfish disinformation campaign by the foreign press. Her personal charisma and India's standing in the international arena slid into poor depths. The fear-psychosis in the country faded feebly but gradually and opposition to her ruthless rule brewed inside the Congress and in the opposition parties. Indira, who extended term of the existing Lok Sabha by one year, decided to hold elections to Lok Sabha in March, 1977.

By then most leaders were released and were busy in evolving formulae and chalking out course of action to beat her at the hustings. It is to be borne in mind that the opposition political parties, always in shambles and shreds, were more so during the Emergency. The more petty, selfish lot of opposition leaders jumped to the Congress for pretty gains. JP and JB Kripalini spearheaded the movement to organise the disarrayed opposition parties. They insisted on complete demolition of the existing opposition parties and formation of a new one and that fructified when Congress (O), Bharatiya Lok Dal, Jana Sangh, and the socialist parties merged to emerge as the Janata Party. Biju had a definite and anti-Indira role in the formation of the new party. He contacted P.C. Sen of West Bengal and some other old Congress leaders and avidly persued the matter to form a new, better party

to counter Congress under Indira Gandhi. In fact, he preceded others in mooting the idea of floating a new party though JP, JBK, Morarji and some others with their Delhi-base advantage accomplished the task quicker and better.

Nonetheless Biju was respected as a front-rank leader and founding member of the Janata Party. He was held in high esteem by people of other regions of the country. During the Janata formation days some people suggested of a shadow Cabinet in the British model to instill hope and belief in the electors that the opposition could deliver the goods if and when it came to power. A Bengali resident of Assam wrote a letter to the editor which appeared in *The Statesman*, Calcutta. In the shadow Cabinet, the letter writer suggested Desai to be the Prime Minister and Ashok Mehta, Charan Singh and LK Advani as the three Deputy Prime Ministers. To Biju he gave the fifth place and alloted the all-important portfolios of Defence and Planning. The suggestion was probably bereft of reasoning or rationale but illustrated unerroneously the national stature he occupied in the opposition politics of the Emergency Days.

In the 1977 elections to the Lok Sabha, Biju contested from Kendrapara Constituency and won. Except for Aska, Brahmapur, Koraput and Nawarangpur Lok Sabha constituencies in south Orissa, Janata Party candidates in other constituencies won with comfortable margin. Though Morarji, Charan Singh, Vajpayee, Jagajivan Ram and others were the Janata Party leaders to canvass for votes in other parts of the country, the mantle fell on Biju's shoulders as far as Orissa was concerned. He could move the public and mobilise votes on the excesses of Emergency and misrule of the state Congress. For the first time in the Lok Sabha, Biju was expected to do something for the state with his clout in the Janata Party and the government. Yes, Biju was made the Cabinet Minister for Steel and Mines, an important

economic ministry in the forefront of development and industrialisation. He probably picked that portfolio on his own to materialise his pet project, the second steel plant in Orissa.

Indians bluntly insulted and blankly taken for granted during the Emergency hoped for so much from the Janata Party government at centre. With Morarji, Charan, Jagjivan, Bahuguna, George Fernandes, Madhu Dandvate, Atal Behari Vajpayee, LK Advani, Raj Narain and Biju Patnaik as ministers, Chandrasekhar as the Party President, JP and JB Kripalini as the friend, philosopher and guide, and a lot elderly statesmen like Vijaylaxmi Pandit, Aruna Asaf Ali etc. to bless the party and government with ungrudging and bountiful benediction and counsels, what the people hoped for was never the moon; it would have been possible to the most possible extent. But the Janata Party Government made story, not history. Desai-Charan, Charan-Jagjivan and Jagjivan-Desai tri-dimensional tussle within the Janata Party and its government at centre made a mockery of high-falutin agenda and ideas like collective leadership and internal democracy of a political party. The troika thought, individually and collectively, that Indira was gone once for all and the stage was set for them to apportion her charisma by occupying the Prime Minister's chair for as long as possible. The internecine squabblings among the three increased day by day and the unpopularity of the government rose inversely. Atal, Advani, George, Dandvate, Dharia, Chandrasekhar and Biju watched the panorama helplessly.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS

Abhimanyu – Son of Arjuna who was killed in the Mahabharat battle when adversaries flouted all edicts and ethics of prevalent warfare.

ACM – Air Chief Marshall

Airavata – The elephant of Indra, the king of Gods; it is the only and unique elephant that was begotten from the churning of the seas by deities and demons.

Antonio and Shylock – Good and evil characters of Shakespeares play "*The Merchant of Venice*".

Ashokavana – The rich and densely wooded pleasure park of Ravana where Sita was interned during the fourteen months she was held hostage by Ravana.

Baji Rout — A twelve-year old fisherman boy of Dhenkanal district who was martyred when he was mercilessly killed by the British police. He refused to ferry the oppressive British police to the other bank of river Brahmani.

Bhababhuti – A great epic poet like Kalidas, Sreeharsa, Magha and Bharavi.

Bhaskara and Aryabhatta — Great astronomers, mathematicians of ancient India.

Boita – Large-sized, yatch-type vessel used by ancient Kalinga merchants and mariners to trade with different and distant lands and islands from the Arabic shores to the Australian coast.

Booting-down – To trample or molest the ground with heavy boots.

Brahmapuri contractor – Contractor belonging to Brahmapur in Southern Orissa.

Casabiana – The twelve-year French boy who died in a fire in a warship because his father directed him not to leave the spot without his order and his father could not come near him when the fire broke out.

Chakachaka – Crisp and new.

Charaka — The renowned physician, surgeon, botanist of ancient India.

CIC – Commander in chief of armed forces.

Connel – For Colonel which is pronounced as 'Connel'. Here Connel is used to heighten the sense of ridicule and embarrassment experienced by the British Colonel.

Cuttackias – Residents of Cuttack

Dal Behera — A martial chieftain of Khurda area in Orissa, who fought hard to oust the British from Orissa soil. Unsuccessful in his endeavour, he roamed in the nearby jungles, like the glorious Rana Pratap, to raise an army. The British announced a hefty price for the informer. While incognito in the jungles he was moved by pitiable plight of a poor fisherman. He dashed to the British police, surrendered and directed that the prize be paid to the poor fisherman.

Dalal – Broker, agent, middleman.

Darshana – To see, to perceive a godhead or a saint.

Dhenku – A derogatory reference to the inhabitants of Dhenkanal district of Orissa really expresses exceeding innocence and simplicity.

Fishes of Biju's kettle – Not the type of person that Biju was.

Garudastambha – The sacred pillar directly opposite to Lord Jagannatha of Puri embraced by the devotees as a mark of embracing the Lord Himself.

Half-fury half-sorry – A situation when some people decry the inefficient police and other express sorrow for the mishap.

Hamdryad – A dangerous and difficult predicament, problem.

Haveli – A rocket-like firecracker

Hey ai eyei – Reckless or derious or nonsense laugh

IB – Intelligence Bureau

IBC – IB Chief

IG – Indira Gandhi

In chunks and junks – Hurriedly and greedily.

Jagannatha – Lord Jagannath of Puri, also called Purusottam, the principal deity in Sreemandir, Puri.

Jai Rajaguru — The principal priest of the emperor of Orissa who rose in revolt against British occupation of Orissa in 1803, but was nabbed and hanged.

Kartikeya – The celebrated celebacy and son of Shiva and Parvati, Commander in Chief of the forces of the gods, and symbol of eternal youth and inspiring adventure.

Kedargouri – The tourist spot at Bhubaneswar that tells the immortal love story of Kedar and Gouri.

Kepler – The German scientist who propounded theories of planetary motion.

Kharavela – The renowned Jain monarch of ancient Orissa famous for Khandagiri and Udayagiri caves near Bhubaneswar.

Kulabrudha – The Grandsire, Madhusudan Das (1848-1934) was affectionately called Kulabrudha as much for his long life as for his authority and reputation in the state of Orissa during his times.

Lalatendu Kesari, Jayati Kesari and Kapilendra Deva – Monarchs of medieval Orissa who brought enormous military and civil glory to Orissa and the Oriyas.

Laxmi — The consort of Narayana, Vishnu, the principal God of Hindus pantheon and is the keeper and distributor of all resources, all luxuries and all enjoyments.

Lingaraj – The famous Shiva idol at Bhubaneswar.

Mahavairavi Mudra – The fearful and destructive dance posture of goddess Kali.

Mama – Mother's brother; here used in a derogatory sense.

Manasarovara – The crystal clear, enchanting lake on the high Himalayas in Tibet, the sacred lake whose water is consecreted by the bathing of Shiva and Parvati who reside in nearby Kailash Hills.

Masochist – Here to bear suffering and torture bravely for a noble cause.

Maunavrata – Fasting for self purification or religious purposes.

Muskil – Tough, sturdy

Nai – No

Narayana — Vishnu, supreme God of Hindus. He is the Absolute and Almighty; nothing is beyond or without Him.

Natavara –The most attractive and erotic form of Lord Krishna.

Oracle of Delphi –The priest of the temple at Delphi, a small town in ancient Greece announced truths and future events.

Ow woo ooup – Explanation of fear and surprise in a low and frightened manner.

Phiringee – The Europeans in general and the British in particular are referred to as such by native Indians.

Pooh pooh – Expression of contempt and ridicule.

Ptolemy — The ancient Egyptian philosopher and astronomer who, like contemporary oriental scholars, established the geo-centric theory that was accepted in Europe till the times of Kepler and Galileo.

Pucca – Pukka, strong and of good quality.

Puspakayana – The flower-light helicopter used by Ravana.

RAWC – Research and Analysis Wing Chief

Sachha – True, genuine.

Sadhaba – Ancient Kalinga merchants and mariners.

Sankhasura – The conch-shaped, aquatic monster that stole 'Vedas' from Brahma's custody. Vishnu killed him and restored Vedas to Brahma.

Selkeirk – Alexander Selkeirk, the lonely shipwreck in William Cowper's poem "The Solitude of Alexander Selkeirk".

Setubandha – The dyke that Sreeram constructed over the sea at Rameshwaram to move his soldiers.

Shankar & Gouri– Shiva and Parvati, Isvara and Uma, source of potential energy and kinetic energy.

Shatarupa – The first woman of Hindu mythology, resembling but predating Eve.

Sloka – Verse

Sudasavrata — The sacred Thursday on the 10th day of the Bright Fortnight when thousands of married Hindu women pray to mother Laxmi for riches, wealth and pleasures.

SOS – Save Our Souls, appeal or outcry in distress.

Sreeharsa – The ancient epic poet.

Surendra Sai — A prince of Sambalpur in Western Orissa who fought against the British even after the First War of Indian Independence died down in many parts of India.

Swargadwara — The holy and well known burial place on the Bay of Bengal of Puri, Orissa. It is believed by Hindus that persons whose dead bodies are burned here attain salvation and eternal bliss.

The Germanic grit and grist and grip — The inventive, imaginative and exemplary painstaking attitude and attributes of Germans.

Tola –A Sanskrit medium school.

Tom-toms – The sound of lathi hitting human head softly and irregularly.

Vini vidi vici – Julius Caesar is said to have said so when he conquered England which means I came, I saw, I conquered.

Vishnu – The principal deity of the Hindus, in charge of sustenance of all creatures.

Wass – An interjectory expression of finality or authority.

Waw, Waw, Waw – Interjection of happiness or satisfaction.

Yama – The death God of Indian mythology, who also stands for rule of law and punctuality.

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